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ABSTRACT

This critical and selective annotated bibliography is restricted to books written for preschool through grade three. Each title in this listing of "black inclusive" items is accompanied by a commentary whose length depends on the merits or faults of each book. The editors have recommended the books or have not according to the following rationale and criteria: whether a black perspective has been taken into consideration in writing the book; the dimension of blackness in the book; how responsible the author is in dealing with problems and issues; whether black characters as depicted look like human beings; how black characters are shown in relationship to white, and vice versa; the purpose, if any, of dialect or slang used; accuracy of a story if dealing with historical or factual events; whether the personality as well as accomplishments of a main character are shown in biographies; and, the extent to which a book frees a child from the white-centered middle class world with its connotation of superiority. Other chapters associated with the bibliography focus on an overview of the children's book world--from segregation to token integration, syndrome patterns in books involving black people, and suggestions for moving beyond token integration. (Editor/RJ)

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STARTING OUT RIGHT: How To Choose Books About Black People For Young Children

Children's Literature Review Board

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Sponsored by the Madison Equal Opportunities Commission
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Dedicated to Kelly (the youngest), Amani,

Julie, Teddy, April, David, Melody, Jim-Jim,

John, Cathy, Brian, Trooper, Paul, Gary,

Beneé and Judy (the oldest).

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About the Editors

General Editor, Bettye I. Latimer

Mrs. Latimer conceived the idea for Starting Out Right as she began searching for good books for her five children. She has taught English in junior and senior high schools in Massachusetts, at Florida A & M University and with a Peace Corps Training Program in Roxbury, Mass. At present, she is a guest lecturer in Black History and Literature for the University of Wisconsin, Extension Services. She received a B.A. from Talladega College(Alabama) and a M.A. from Purdue University. She has done further graduate study at the University of Wisconsin. Much of her real education has derived from being involved in community action projects which includes tutoring Black children after school, instituting a library for the first "Freedom School," and helping to organize a state-wide museum exhibit on The Black Community. Recent, she has spoken to various groups in the area of language and symbols of racism.

Associate Editors

Margaret Green

Since receiving a B.A. and M.A. from Stanford University Mrs. Green has been continuing her formal education. She is currently working on a Ph. D. in German at the University of Wisconsin, though she feels that working intensively on Starting Out Right might stimulate her to pursue a career in library science. She has one son. She feels that she has derived much self-education from working with groups such as this Board, the League of Women Voters, and the Madison Equal Opportunities Commission.

Dorothy Holden

Mrs. Holden is the mother of two sons, both of whom prompted her interest in researching the material for Starting Out Right. She received her B.A. from Wayne State

University. Most of her jobs as a social worker have enabled her to work with children through public school and other institutions in Pittsburgh and Detroit. She is currently chairman of a city-wide Human Relations PTA council, active in the out-patient recreation at a local mental hospital and a tour guide for the University of Wisconsin Elvehem Art Center.

Ann Cosby

Mrs. Cosby has taught elementary school for nine years. She has worked in Chicago, Des Moines and Detroit and currently teaches in Madison. In Detroit, she helped to develop a widely used method for remedial reading techniques and materials. She has also been a curriculum materials consultant for the Madison Public Schools Human Relations Department. Mrs. Cosby graduated from Chicago Teachers College with a B.A. and has taken graduate work at Roosevelt University. She is the mother of two daughters.

Joy Newmann

Mrs. Newmann's community service work has been as extensive as her professional occupation as a social worker. She sometimes refers to herself as a community change agent, having worked with the Madison Equal Opportunities Commission, the Wisconsin Committee on Human Relations in Education, and various committees on Human and Inter-Group Relations in local school projects. She helped to establish a day care center for migrant workers in Ohio and was a member of CORE and Fair Housing Committees in the Boston area. As a child and public welfare social worker for six years, she worked in Massachusetts, California and Ohio. She is the mother of a son and a daughter. She received a B.S.E. from Ohio State University and a M.S.W. from Boston University.

Marian Todd

Mrs. Todd has spent five years teaching fifth grade and is currently on leave from the Madison Public Schools to pursue graduate studies. As a teacher in an all white school, she saw the necessity of using multi-ethnic materials to offset her students' parochial view of the world. She has three children. She graduated from Denison University (Ohio) and received her teaching certificate from the University of Wisconsin. Her work with Starting Out Right helped to stimulate her interest in professive teaching techniques.

FOREWORD

Starting Out Right is the result of a self-initiated research project conducted by six women, all of whom presently live in Madison, Wisconsin. (see "About the Editors"). We organized as the Children's Literature Review Board.

Initially, we were unhappy with the meagre supply of Black-inclusive books which our children were securing through public libraries, public schools, local bookstores and book clubs. To rectify this--at least locally--our original idea was to prepare a comprehensive bibliography which could be distributed to key people in Wisconsin. We thought this would serve to increase the supply of Black-focused books and thereby alleviate our concern.

Shortly after our reading began, we quickly realized two indisputable facts: 1) Innumerable "multi-ethnic" bibliographies already existed, prepared by various educational and library groups and 2) the quality of books involving Blacks was astonishingly uneven. None of the available bibliographies seemed to deal significantly with the quality of this genre of books. Moreover, we could not find much literature nor any books that dealt with the issues of Black-inclusive books.

With this awareness, we decided to restructure our priorities. Our first goal was to determine the status of Black-inclusive books for children. Through our own critical observations and analysis, we felt it was possible to construct a set of definitive criteria for judging these books. We felt that this approach would enable us to assess the quality of this literature, which we discovered was more critical and urgent than preparing a comprehensive bibliography.

However, we did not discard the idea of a bibliography. We felt it was necessary to supplement these observations with a specialized bibliography.

For the better part of two years, we spent innumerable hours researching potential book titles and reading

more than 300 books that were candidates for the bibliography. We also spent considerable time tracking down other articles on this subject, which again we discovered that there are woefully few. Finally, the ideas for Starting Out Right took shape after we had spent long hours carefully examining our raw materials. Our main objective was to ultimately provide a conceptual framework for children's books that deal with Blacks and to offer some guidelines and rationale for examining this new body of literature.

Our bibliography is restricted to books written for pre-school through grade three. Each title is accompanied by a commentary whose length depends on the merits or faults of each book. By pointing out books which we recommend and those we do not recommend, we hope the reader will be able to see how we have applied our criteria and rationale.

The bibliography is limited for several reasons. Most multi-ethnic bibliographies tend to slight books for very young readers. It is vitally important that every child be exposed to Black-inclusive books at the outset of his reading career. His ideas and attitudes toward people--especially groups of people--take shape during his pre-school years. (For a meaningful discussion of this, see Race Awareness in Young Children by Mary Ellen Goodman). Because these early years are an impressionable stage of development, we wished to assess the overall quality of Black-inclusive books and the kinds of images of Black people that writers are apt to convey to young children.

Our children are Black and white, as we ourselves are. We believe that they deserve to have the best books possible, not just mediocre ones, or "will do" or token integration books. We want them to have books that reflect genuine experiences and offer honest explanations. We want them to have books in which they see people like themselves and people whose facial colors and facial profiles are different than theirs. We want them to have books that show the beauty of Blacks and the beauty of whites, the beauty of Indians and the beauty of Orientals, the beauty of Mexicans and the beauty of Puerto-Ricans. The beauty of all. The beauty of people.

We would resent our children having access to books that are mostly white and white-oriented in terms of the values, people and history reflected inside their covers.

We would resent having them read books which leave them puzzled about the historical and contemporary issures underlying tensions between Black and white people.

We have found books that elated us (and our children) and books that arouse our deepest anger and indignation. Whatever books we have examined that met the age criteria, we have included in this manuscript. We consider this a pioneer study. We hope that the reader will thoughtfully consider the ideas we put forth, so that he or she will feel a need to exercise more sensitivity in choosing books about Blacks for Young Children.

Chapter 1

The Children's Book World: From Segregation to Token Integration

Until recent years, there have been few children's books written about or including Black people. Even today, most children's books present a world in which all the characters, at least the significant characters, are white. In essence, they reflect the segregated world in which we live and are a constant reminder of the inordinate value placed on whiteness in our society. The message that such books carry for Black children is that they do not really matter or count. Conversely, white children are imbued with a progressive sense of superiority from their earliest encounter with the world of literature.

Consider the huge, plush world of fun and fantasy which young children delight in. All the loveable characters--the clowns, the fairies, elves and angels, Peter Pan, Little Red Riding Hood, and that grand matriarch, Mother Goose--are invariably white. Even Dr. Suess's fantastic characters, who appear in a bright array of colors, are seldom shown as black.

Most biographies of great personalities have been written about men and women of white ancestry to the exclusion of equally great Americans with black, brown, or yellow skin. Books intended to stimulate career interests repeatedly show a white person excelling as ballet dancer, doctor, journalist, or astronaut. Popular serial characters, e.g. Pippi Longstocking, are consistently portrayed as white and the descriptions of their adventures further confirm their whiteness.

All of this is a heady diet for young children who cannot help but conclude that white is the norm in our society and that a superior privileged status is the natural birthright of white people. If books supposedly deal with all kinds of people, one consequently begins to rationalize that Blacks are not people since they do not appear in symbolic form. The young mind can assume that Blacks do not experience whatever storybooks deal with. They do not go shopping with their mothers or take a trip to the zoo; they do not jump rope or learn their A B C's; they do not dream about monsters; they do not have birthdays; they do not exist in the roles of fairies, clowns, astronauts or the baby Jesus Christ.

When Black characters have entered into children's literature in the past, their roles have been constricted to stereotyped and negative images, providing further confirmation of the idea that Black people were somehow inferior to whites. Traditionally, a Black person has been portrayed as a servant or maid, a janitor, a slapstick comedian or a villain. Most often, they have appeared as peripheral characters having little or no significance to the story, as anyone who is familiar with the "mammy" in the famous Bobbsey Twins stories will acknowledge. With the exception of an occasional biography of a great man like George Washington Carver or Ralph Bunche, the array of Black characters in children's books have seldom been presented as real people doing meaningful things. Whether jovial or serious, they have usually been portrayed as submissive, inconsequential and deferring--but never too intelligent.

The demeaning use of Black characters is reinforced by the general meaning of blackness or black. Not everything which is black is necessarily ugly or undesirable. However, the cultural implication is such because of the way dictionaries define the word black and the way it is figuratively used in everyday language.

The usual definitions of "black" are totally negative. Moreover, we have been trained to transform palatable, ordinary words into negative concepts, merely by adding "black" to them. A business market is acceptable, except if it is a black market. A white lie is excusable whereas a black lie is the worst possible lie. The common image of a sheep is that of an animal with white wool, but a black sheep takes on a completely different meaning. The variation is endless, but the theme of "black" with a connotation of evil, criminal or undesirability appears in diverse ways.

It is understandable then that children at an early age begin to associate blackness with something undesirable and eventually transfer this to people. Consider the following activity which appears in a widely used primary dictionary.* It is suggested that the teacher use this exercise to crystallize the meaning of "black" for her children.

> Would your children like to write or tell about a 'black day' in their lives? Don't press the issue if they aren't interested. But don't be surprised

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* Word Wonder Dictionary (Teacher's Edition) by Doris Whitman, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966, p. 3.

> if certain children get a great deal of satisfaction out of this kind of verbalizing. It may be interesting for you to discover what some of your children's black days are (especially if they involve school!)

It is clear that the traditional treatment of Black characters in children's literature has served to perpetuate the negative image of Black people which most whites in American society, and too many Blacks, hold. Whether they have been omitted, allowed to appear in inferior and inconsequential roles or even granted an occasional acknowledgement of excellence, the idea that Black people do not really matter or count is reinforced over and over in the minds of young children through the books they read. Such an idea, whether consciously or unconsciously held, serves to perpetuate the myth of white supremacy which has been the legacy of generations of Americans.

Fortunately, the treatment of Black people in children's literature is beginning to change. Increasingly, authors and illustrators are acknowledging the multiethnic nature of our society by including non-white characters in their stories. This inclusion sometimes appears to be a token gesture. A number of children's books about Black people have emerged, some of which are beautifully executed and mark the beginning of a move to both confirm the existence of Black people and to record a full and accurate picture of their history and experiences. However, this beginning must be viewed with measured optimism. The number of good books involving Blacks still represents a very small proportion of the total body of children's literature.

What we are forced to recognize is that books have not been integrated in a vacuum. The process of including Blacks emerges from a social frame of reference based on stereotypes and a cultural tradition of racism shared by American writers. Characteristic of that tradition is a perception of Black Americans which is largely negative and irrational. While many people, including some writers, may explicitly reject that aspect of our cultural tradition, it is not easy to free ourselves from its crippling impact on our perceptions, attitudes and values. Consequently, we find that a number of books involving Blacks are written from a

narrow and distorted white perspective. At best, these books lack authenticity. At worst, they tend to reinforce some of the racist attitudes they apparently attempt to dispel.

The introduction of the Black experience into children's literature, then, does not guarantee good and fair writing about Blacks. We take for granted that such an innovation represents quality and progress. However, quantity should not be confused with quality. It is necessary to have some means for selectivity, particularly with a new movement, so that the consumer of the product--in this case impressionable children--can be assured of excellent quality.

Unfortunately, Black-inclusive books do tend to be accepted on face value, partly because of their novelty. Whether it is the pictures or the content that first attracts us, books involving Black characters become stock items. Since the supply is limited, there is a tendency to utilize whatever is available, sometimes without regard to quality or merit. In our haste to rectify the omission of Blacks from literature, we are prone to accept booksof inferior quality, often with the apology that "something (meaning some degree of integration) is better than nothing." There are too many glowing reviews of integrated books in professional journals. And parents, librarians, and teachers--the ones who ought to be the most exacting critics--tend to indiscriminately embrace these books.

We admit that we ourselves have been guilty of an uncritical acceptance of Black-inclusive books. Before undertaking this study, we sometimes found that we were forced to abort a story or skip over certain passages while reading to our young children. The passage in question just didn't "seem right" and didn't seem to be congruent with our efforts to help children appreciate themselves as well as other people. Certain books that we had been hopeful about seemed to deprecate some characters--Blacks in particular. Yet, ironically enough, we had selected these books because they featured Blacks. We eventually came to the realization that we needed to sharpen our own critical abilities so that we could more sensitively select good books for children.

This book is an attempt to share with others our critical analysis of the broad spectrum of books--old and new--which include black characters, written for young children of preschool age through the early primary grades. Some of these books present Black characters exclusively. In others, the Black character may appear as the central figure or may play a peripheral role. Essentially, we were interested in assessing how the experiences and images of Black people are conveyed to young children through literature, whatever the manner of presentation.

We are not merely interested in a book per se or in an individual book; rather we are interested in how certain books convey the image of Blackness. This study intends to go beyond any single author or any single book to deal with that issue.

Inevitably, the question arises as to whether it is valid to judge a book on a racial basis. Some book review critics maintain that to do so is to succumb to using literature as a propoganda tool and to allow sociology and politics to supersede artistic endeavor. On the other hand, as long as racial attitudes and images determine social values, books can be legitimately judged on this basis. In a perceptive essay on the "Black Perspective," the authors sum it up this way:

> ...it is precisely because we have failed to examine our own racial attitudes fully enough that the sociologically determined stereotype continues to predominate in books about black children... The very appearance of blacks in American literature has been historically and culturally determined. The abnormal invisibility of blacks in American literature corresponds to the invisibility foisted on them by American society. When blacks were finally represented in literature, they were presented in terms of the conceptions white society had of blacks, rather than perceptions of them as individuals.*

On this basis, then, it is unmistakably clear that ethnic images reflecting the Black experience form a significant component of children's literature.

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* "Black Perspective" by Judith Thompson and Gloria Woodard in Wilson Library Bulletin, December, 1969, pp. 416-424.

Our aim is not simply to enumerate titles of available literature. Much of this has been well done by librarians and others in the field of multi-ethnic education. Our aim is not simply to provide a list of what we considered good literature as it relates to the Black experience. We wish to make some comment on how this experience occurred within the text, how it was handled, and the impressions likely to be left on the mind of the reader. Our aim is not simply to provide a capsule of the story but to elaborate when appropriate on dominant qualities in a given book, whether they be positive or negative.

Finally, our aim is not to censor. We have attempted to differentiate between those books which meet certain critical standards of acceptability and those which fall short of these standards. By providing critical guidelines, our hope is that the reader will come away with a better sense of what to look for in a book so that he or she can make an independent determination of those books which are relatively free of racist inferences and degrading symbols. Ultimately, we hope that this study will enable adults to choose books that recognize Black people and at the same time impart to children a sense of respect for them.

We felt it important to detail any criticism that makes a book unacceptable in our estimation. It is equally important that we explain how we arrived at a conclusion about these books and what we considered to be fair guidelines in making a judgment. The next chapter is devoted to an explication of the evaluative criteria that we used. It will be useful for those who are concerned about differentiating "bad" or potentially harmful multi-ethnic books from "good" or healthy books.

Chapter 2

Criteria for Judging Books Involving Black People

At the outset, we felt it was essential to consider both the needs of children and the responsibility of the writer in arriving at criteria for judging books about Black people. No longer can we afford to present children with a distorted view of history which glorifies the past of white Americans and, at the same time, often totally ignores the existence and heritage of Black Americans. If children are to be prepared to cope with the realities of a pluralistic society, they must be able to free themselves from any conscious or unconscious racism which has been a legacy of this country since its beginning. Children need to understand and come to grips with the history and experience of Black people and all of the other forgotten Americans who are a vital part of the life of this country.

Kenneth Clark, a noted psychologist and educator, points out that children's attitudes towards Blacks are determined not by physical contact with them but by contact with prevailing attitudes toward them.* Since in our society children tend to be isolated from others unlike themselves--culturally and economically--books provide one of the few ways to shatter the myths about Black people on which racist attitudes flourish.

Thus the writer of children's books about Black Americans has a special responsibility to move beyond the stereotypes, myths, and half-truths perpetuated about Black people to develop characters--whether real or imagined--whose unique heritage and personal experiences have an authentic ring about them. The creative writer of fiction has an especially rich opportunity to expose the young to a broad range of life experiences in which both black and white characters are shown in equitably relationships, performing a variety of roles, settings and occupations, experiencing the range of emotions and aspirations common to all people. These kinds of vicarious

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* See Prejudice and Your Child, Kenneth Clark (Beacon Press, 1955, 1963) p. 25.

experiences are invaluable for white children whose day-to-day life may not include any opportunity to know Black people as individuals. For the Black child, it is crucial that the world of literature reflect his reality as well as offer significant options for his future.

This is not to suggest that a book should be evaluated only in terms of its presentation of a Black personality or how it deals with racism or social problems. If a writer cannot get beyond an idea and makes the story a mere vehicle for that idea, the child is deprived of the chance to gain real insight from the unfolding of the story itself (e.g., see review of Black and White Together). Clearly, the most successful stories are those which avoid explicit moralizing but which present human experiences honestly in a way that increases a child's understanding of himself and the world around him (e.g., see review of Evan's Corner).

It is difficult to isolate a single aspect of a book and even more difficult to evaluate it on a single attribute. We have tried not to evade the difficulty, but instead to prepare some objective guidelines upon which these particular books--or any books dealing with minorites--can be judged. To effect a real change in negative attitudes that children can procure from reading materials, we must know what to offer them and what might be detrimental.

The criteria that follow represent guidelines for judging a book that involves Black people. We ask a series of relevant questions--questions that will help the reader to assess a book in a specific way. Not all of these questions need to be applied to a single book. To properly evaluate, one needs to determine what the book is all about--its purpose, its style, its content. From that point on, one can select the criteria which seem appropriate.

The criteria point out definite characteristics and areas to look for in evaluating a book involving Blacks. Though we have applied these criteria to the early primary books which are reviewed in the bibliography, these standards can be utilized for almost any age level and for most types of books. Overall, the criteria deal with three main areas: 1) the pictures and illustrations, 2) the word content and 3) the tone and perspective set by the author.

1. Is the book written so that a Black perspective has been taken into consideration?

The author who attempts to write a story about the lives of Black people must have some knowledge and appreciation of the Black experience. Neither good intentions nor good writing ability qualifies one to speak from a Black perspective, as evidenced by the multitude of books about Black people which are too often a kind of "...verbal minstrel show--whites in black faces--rather than the expression of a real or imagined experience derived from wearing the shoe."*

No one character can represent all people who identify themselves as Black; nor can any character speak to the needs and total experiences of Blacks. Yet we can identify some story situations where it is necessary for the Black perspective to be utilized in order to give the Black person as an individual a fair representation.

First of all, there should never be a stigma attached to being Black. Period.

Secondly, the writer should be aware of the situations that he puts Black characters in. Unwittingly, he may select a role which corresponds to old stereotypes. Or his characters may perform a role which confirms the expectations set by contemporary racism and its peculiar stereotypes. If a character does not move beyond the stereotype, this heightens the stereotype and nurtures prejudiced ideas that are much too wide-spread already. Blatant stereotypes like having Blacks sing and dance are fairly obvious.

However, there are other stereotyped roles brought into light more recently--the role of being the sole Black in an all white situation so that superficial integration immediately takes play; the role of having to explain oneself for the benefit and enlightenment of whites; the role of being a super-extraordinary Black; the role of allowing whites to resolve problems faced by Blacks; the role of being the recipient of the patronage and goodwill of white people; and the role of being assimilated and submerged into whiteness without retaining whatever one's Black culture has provided.

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* Thompson and Woodard, op. cit., 1969

It may seem that these kinds of roles are more appropriate to relationships between adults. However, we have found that these roles are assigned to young children in books written for children.

Thirdly, let us say that Black characters are sometimes legitimately set in situations that bring forth poverty or discrimination. A Black character may also react to situations out of a sense of fear and loneliness or with submissive behavior or with aggressive behavior as exemplified in riots and mass protests. Certainly, his fear should not be made to seem unwarranted. He should not be blamed for his poverty. But if he acts fearfully or lives poorly, there is an accountability factor which the author has a special responsibility to deal with. Too often writers 1) ignore the accountability factor or 2) place blame on the victims.

But a responsible writer will design his story or picture book so that the reader clearly understands who is responsible--perhaps some character who unknowingly acts out a prejudice; perhaps a genuine bigot; perhaps the basic economic inequities; perhaps restrictive laws; perhaps the web of bureaucracy; perhaps social mores, traditionally sanctioned ~~but~~ not questioned. Perhaps grievances are acted out in spontaneous protests simply because people are fed up and insulted by the way in which they are forced to live. It is up to the writer to clarify the situation. Above all writers should protect the integrity of the character and not allow his story to inappropriately place blame on Blacks, either as individuals or because they belong to a "race."

In some books, Black characters are victimized or placed in a position of humiliation as it often happens in real life. The point of view of the victimized should be represented. Moreover, the dignity of the Black characters should be preserved. They should bring a sense of self-worth, of ambition, of self-awareness in confronting a situation. This is especially true if the story intends to shed some light on the troublesome experiences of Black people.

Black characters should not be sacrificed to white characters, even though the latter might actually wield some undue but empirically real power over them. The situation or problem can be absurd and irrational, but the characters should not be made to look foolish. This is not to suggest that all Black characters have to be triumphant or heroic. They may be defeated, but the book should convey a sense of dignity and worth about them because they are human.

We must expect and demand that writers deal honestly but sensitively with the black-white situations. In some stories, the author will include segregation as a detail of the plot. As the story develops, it turns out that an animal (or some other improbable force) rescues the Black character from the throes of segregation (e.g. see review of No Mules). This is insulting to both the spirit and the achievements of Black people and it violates the ethics of the Black perspective.

In books that deal with historical events, the Black perspective is necessary, although history too often is written to satisfy the needs of the majority white population. Too often, we write books about how whites felt about Blacks, how whites treated Blacks and why it was necessary for whites to develop certain attitudes. However, we do not write history books that show how Blacks felt about whites, what Blacks did for the progress of whites, what Blacks did for themselves and how Black Americans have protested from enslavement through today.

We must ask how the Black child will perceive the book in question. We must ask how this book will affect the minds of Black children and adults. Will it evoke a sense of worth or a sense of shame? We must ask if a Black person, particularly a child, will feel uncomfortable because the story represents one side of a situation. Finally, we must ask if we ourselves, both Black and white adults, will feel uncomfortable if called upon to read this book to children. And, if children themselves will have a feeling of incompleteness after reading a particular book.

The question of perspective is difficult to deal with in the abstract. Yet, in our opinion, it is the most important question. In a sense, it is the final arbiter.*

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*In our opinion, this question is important enough to apply to all books that deal with ethnic minorities. Although this study does not deal with the American Indian, we must point out that the Indian perspective should be looked for in the variety of books that involve or mention the Indian. Frequently, children's books will suggest that Indians are wild, savage, violent and crafty murderers. Indian people do not think of themselves nor their ancestors in this way. It is both unfair and unfortunate that far too many books present the "white perspective" of the Indian and thereby indoctrinate children with countless myths about an entire nation of people.

2. <u>What is the dimension of Blackness in the book?</u>

   A. Why is it called a Black literature book?

   B. Why is it on a bibliography related to ethnic minorities?

   C. What is the function of the Blackness in the book?

   D. If the book is predominantly white, how effective is the inclusion of Black characters? Does it go beyond the token integration level?

   E. Is the story interesting itself or does it depend upon the novelty of the Black faces for interest?

3. <u>How responsible is the author in dealing with problems and issues?</u>

   A. Does he make an honest presentation?

   B. Is a problem presented clearly but without over simplification?

   C. Is the solution that is offered too simple for a complex problem?

   D. Has the author treated a serious problem in a flippant way?

   E. How are the Black characters treated in a problem situation? If they have been exposed to dehumanizing, degrading, or insulting experiences, does the author manufacture a happy ending? Is it the Black character who is called upon to exercise all the understanding and forgiveness?

   F. How does the author handle acts of racism or prejudice?. Are there explanations within the context of the story? Is this anti-social behavior passed off as a mere impoliteness; is it ignored, or is it shown for what it is?

4. Do the Black characters look like human beings?

Because a number of children's books depend on high picture content for their appeal, this is an important question. A sensitive artist will want to preserve his creativity, yet avoid falling into the snare of stereotypes.

Grotesque characters, overdrawn figures and exaggerated features are common pitfalls. The resulting stereotype might be unintentional on the part of the illustrator. Nevertheless, characters that can be judged as such easily become the object of ridicule and the prime purpose of having books create respect instead of disrespect for people is at once lost.

Because many standards of beauty are traditionally based on a European or Nordic profile, it is easy for one to distort the non-white characters--again quite unintentionally. The artist must bring a sense of appreciation and feeling for the dark skinned face he portrays; otherwise his imagination will rely on common stereotypes subconsciously imbedded in his mind.

A good book will not indulge in common stereotypes in referring to Black characters, e.g. "...his white eyes stood out" or "his beautiful white teeth..." It is as if the character's major asset is that part of him is white! He must be aware of how he uses the word black or its synonyms. Most often these words have negative connotations that can easily be transferred to the dark face appearing in the pictures. The final responsibility on the part of the writer has to do not so much with what he avoids or excludes, but with what he includes. Authors should make a deliberate effort to describe dark-skinned people. White hands are generally described as small, delicate like china; a symbol of purity; blue eyes are clear as a May day and filled with honesty. Black people should also have brown eves filled with honesty and dark, delicate small hands or strong, large hands for that matter.

The point is not to make Black and white people exactly alike in their features, but to suggest that authors should acknowledge the physical being of Blacks in their stories. When some writers begin to deal with Blacks or other minorities, they might want to ignore color, reasoning that their characters should appear simply as (continued on next page).

genuine human beings, without regard to color. Hopefully, writers will avoid this kind of "color blindness," and treat color as an asset to the human personality--even the once despised color of black skin.

5. Will the young reader know that he is looking at a Black person or do the characters emerge "grey" in appearance to resemble Caucasians in black face?

6. Is the Black character portrayed as a unique individual or as a representative of a group?

7. Does the clothing or behavior seem to perpetuate the stereotypes about Blacks being primitive or submissive?

8. Is the story romanticized? Is the character glamorized or glorified, especially in a biography?

9. Is the setting authentic, so that the child reader is able to recognize it as an urban or suburban or rural or fantasized situation?

10. Does the author set a patronizing or a paternalistic tone?

11. Is a Black character used as a vehicle to get a point across so that he becomes a tool of literary exploitation and acts artificial rather than real?

12. How are the Black characters shown in relationship to white characters and vice-versa?

    A. Is either placed in a passive, submissive, inferior or subordinate role without justification?

    B. Does the book give the impression that the survival and well being of Black people comes from the generousity, concern and goodwill of white people? If so, this is a misleading point of view.

    C. Does the book have Blacks as authority figures or decision-making people or creators or inventors; or do the images of Blacks show them receiving services or advice or assistance largely from white benefactors?

13. If any dialect or slang is used, does it have a purpose?

    A. Does it ring true?

    B. Is it used to reinforce the myth that Blacks speak a "substandard" language?

    C. Does it blend naturally with the story?

    D. Does it evoke disrespect toward the user or in any way demean him?

    E. If there are differences between the language of Blacks and whites in a particular story, do these differences reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate the superiority-inferiority complex?

14. How accurate is the story if it deals with historical or factual events?

    A. If the book is being used in a teaching situation, does the teacher feel that he has an adequate knowledge of Black History in order to evaluate the viewpoint and data presented?

    B. If the book deals with American history, are Blacks included as an integral part of the American experience? Are they segregated into a separate unit without being included in the other chapters or units of discussion?

15. In a biography, is the personality as well as the accomplishments of the main character shown?

16. How much does this book free the child from the white-centered middle class world with its connotation of superiority?

Chapter 3

Syndrome Patterns in Books Involving Black People

As a result of extensive reading, we have been able to classify some of the most common flaws that occur in Black-inclusive books. These traps or "syndromes" as we have chosen to call them, represent qualities that we think are undesirable in handling the Black experience. They are applicable to other minorities and images projected about them.

Books vary as to the number or the intensity of the syndrome. Sometimes the presence of a syndrome seriously impairs the overall quality of a book in which case it would become a book which we would not recommend. At other times, it is merely a minor distraction, as in the case of the oasis syndrome which we define later in this chapter. A book of this kind would be recommended with certain reservations spelled out.

A majority of these syndromes might be found within one book, but this is the exception rather than the rule. A book which is ultimately found unsatisfactory seems to have multiple syndromes; or else it may have a glaring example of a particular syndrome. Bright April (de Angeli) is an example in which several syndromes are apparent. A review of this book appears in chapter 4. Though considered a children's classic, it handles the black-white tensions in an irresponsible way, despite the excellent literary qualities of the story.

We offer an explication of these syndromes as a supplement to the criteria set forth earlier. We have attempted to select certain books that illustrate a syndrome in order to demonstrate more concretely some objectionable details which are frequent in this literature.

Romantic Syndrome

The romantic syndrome results when a book tends to glorify situations on the one hand and to ignore or gloss over realities on the other. This is accomplished when the author is successful in isolating and emphasizing (continued on the next page).

the virtues of a situation. By allowing these to predominate, a continuous, happy story line develops. Naturally, this results in an unreal and unbalanced presentation.

We have found that romanticization tends to occur most commonly in two instances. It is found in illustrations and to a large extent in biographies. This does not mean that the romantic syndrome is limited to these areas, but it is most likely to occur in a book that has a large picture content as well as in biographies.

Because of the complexity of human experiences, it is difficult to simplify and condense a man's life into a few pages. We feel that when a biography reads more like a eulogy than a documentary of a life experience, the biographer is misleading the young reader.

As for judging illustrations for their romanticization, it is important to give the artist his "artistic freedom." There is a difference between romanticization and artistic freedom and the two must not be confused. Wherever we have citicized a book, we have attempted to make this careful distinction.

Lillian Patterson has written a simplified biography, Frederick Douglass: Freedom Fighter, in general with compassion and clarify. Unfortunately, the book's outstanding fault is with the picture representation. There is hardly any indication that Douglass is a slave boy, confined to the wretched evil of being bought and sold like a horse. The pictures seem more intent on emphasizing the gentility of the master to his slave rather than showing the brutality of the slave's experience.

One picture, for example, shows a white woman giving Douglass some teacakes from her bedroom window. In another, Douglass is portrayed sitting with the master's children outdoors on the curbside; these pictures are more suggestive of a lovely companionship between children posing for a Nabisco TV ad. One picture does show a hostile Douglass in confrontation with a white slave-breaker, but on the whole, the pictures are in contrast to the hardship and anguish which Douglass describes in his full length autobiography.

Frequently, the romantic syndrome can be identified more by what is omitted than by what is included in the story. By avoiding certain events, the author is able to camouflage some of the harsher realizations of the subject matter. As a result, the young reader is often left with a false impression and a plastic portrait that sometimes reaches the proportion of an idol god. A good example is d'Aulaire's Abraham Lincoln. It presents idyllic, pastoral drawings which contradict the hardships that the authors try to convey about Lindoln's childhood. Moreover, it romanticizes slavery and exaggerates Lincoln's compassion for Indians and Blacks (see review).

For further examples of this syndrome, see reviews of Ned and Ted and Ed and Ted by Florine Robinson.

Avoidance Syndrome

The avoidance syndrome has a special and significant application for the Black experience. Generally, there is a denial of the harsh and oppressive conditions under which Blacks have functioned. It is as though they operated in some kind of people-less vacuum in which white society has neither caused nor sustained their oppression. There is a reluctance to identify bigots and bigotry, and the extreme to which white America has gone to make life miserable and inhumane for generations of Blacks.

The avoidance syndrome is commonly practiced. In our opinion, it seems to be a self-protective device on the part of white-oriented writers who seem unable to come to grips with the reality that they, too, are implicated in the oppression of Blacks. Often this avoidance of the truth is justified on the grounds that young children are unable to deal with the painful realities of our past and present. We suspect that this may be a greater problem for adults than the young.

Let us attempt to spell out some instances of avoidance that we have found. In The Picture Life of Martin Luther King (Young), the author fails to make clear the atrocities that caused Dr. King to devote his life to fighting injustices. The child reader does not have a clear idea of what Dr. King was doing, why it was important, or what motivated him to engage in an unusual and ferocious struggle. (See review.)

Some books will identify slaves as "Negroes" or "Blacks," but will not describe the slave master in racial terms. In Meet Abe Lincoln (Cary) Blacks are referred to as slaves and everybody else as "people." In part, this attitude represents a holier-than-thou posture. More important, we must recognize it as a part of the sociology of racism wherein Blacks are thought of as something other than people. Unfortunately, writers succumb to the propaganda of racism and reinforce it by the manner in which they write.

This book also presents slavery as a benign institution, stressing that it existed as an economic imperative for the development of industrialized America. The following excerpt illustrates both the condescending language of racism and the economic justification for slavery that undergirds the book.

> It was cold in the North. It was too cold to grow cotton. So people in the North did not own slaves. They did not need them.

Immediately, one asks, who are the 'people in the North' and who is the 'they?' The questions are rhetorical for we adults know who 'they' are. Yet this exemplifies how writers can abdicate responsibility. Furthermore, this quotation crystallizes the distortion and dishonesty that we have found in this book and several others like it. Slavery was not merely an economic institution and cannot be so justified. Whites in the North did own slaves. Too many times we have had to read about Phyllis Wheatley, an early Black poet, who was once owned, as some books say, by a "distinguished Boston gentleman." This is a dubious title at best for a slaveowner, but it illustrates a way in which many books talk about slaveowners.

Bootstrap Syndrome

The incidence of this syndrome in books involving Black people is common and seems to be derived from two main premises: 1) that the possession of certain personal virtues brings one inevitable rewards, and 2) that problems one encounters by virtue of being Black will be resolved by a system that has made Blackness a handicap. This is

tantamount to believing that the slave will be freed by the master; or that the oppressor will free the oppressed; or that the burglar will return stolen goods out of a sense of respect and compassion for his victim.

The bootstrap syndrome maintains that success is guaranteed if one is properly motivated, if he helps himself, strives for an education and perseveres. These are worthy virtues in themselves. The raw fact is that while most white people have been successful by utilizing these tools, most Blacks haven't. The presence of this syndrome in a story usually overlooks the fact that Blacks have had to contend with the aggravations and injustices of a set of laws and attitudes designed specifically against them and in some cases instituted specifically to guarantee their failure.

The Black characters in bootstrap books are usually paragons of virtue who overcome their problems by conforming to a few simple rules. Basically, they are told to work hard and maintain their ambitions in spite of prejudice. They are also admonished to redress their grievances through institutional channels.

Some examples of the type of book that relies heavily on the bootstrap syndrome are Bright April (de Angeli) and two recent titles The Street of the Flowerboxes and When Carlos Closed the Street (Mann). The critiques found in the reviews section of this book detail exactly the faults of these stories.

Oasis Syndrome

In the world of picture books, the oasis syndrome is among the easiest to identify. When a story involves a number of people or people symbols, these are traditionally white. Among some newer books, the picture environment might include one Black person among its total array of characters. Naturally, that black face is highly visible. Naturally,that book is placed on an ethnic bibliography and classified as being integrated. To a degree, it is. When books are integrated in an insignificant way, they suffer from what we identify as the oasis syndrome. It is comparable to what is commonly referred to as "token integration."

Perhaps this is the least critical syndrome. Certainly we do not condemn such a book or suggest that it be removed from library shelves. In pointing out this syndrome, we are not trying to play a numbers game or suggest a percentage formula of Blacks to whites. We have seen a number of story situations, such as those described below, that could have easily included more than one Black face. As a rule, the oasis syndrome appears in fictionalized stories as opposed to biography or information-dispensing books.

Corduroy (Freeman) and Who's in Charge of Lincoln (Fife) illustrate the oasis syndrome. (Except for this fault, both are quite good and acceptable storybooks.) Both have Black children as the dominant character. In both, much of the story takes place in public places so that it would have been possible to include other brown faces in the the "crowd scenes," for example. In both, all the authority figures are white, with the exception of the children's mothers.

The Freeman book depicts a wish-fulfillment story common to children's books. A small, Black girl longs to have Corduroy, a teddy bear she discovers on a department store shelf. That shelf contains dolls and clowns; they are all white. So are all the customers, the clerks, the people on the escalator and on the street. Unfortunately, there are no people symbols in the external environment who confirm the existence of the Black child's reality as a person with dark skin. (See review.) The Fife book has literally no reason for not having Black personalities other than Lincoln. Lincoln travels to Washington, D.C.--which is not a city where Black people are few in numbers.

Again, in Just Like You (Klein), a story which attempts to present the multi-ethnic nature of our world, we encounter a small Black girl awash in a sea of white faces. Even her doll and dog are white as are all the adults shown performing a variety of important roles. The significance of whiteness and the importance of white people in our society is again subtly reiterated in a way that defeats the author's apparent intent to convey a respect for differences in people. (See review.)

Let's suppose that a book's pictorial environment is realistic when it portrays a sole brown face among several whites. Should we expect an author or artist to falsify what he perceives as reality? Is it not conceivable that a Black person might live or work or go to school in an otherwise all white situation? Or vice-versa? Is this morally wrong? Is it harmful for children to see one unique face--a brown or salmon--among opposites?

We are not suggesting that books which deal with real life experiences should throw in a brown face at random in order to achieve some sort of "racial balance." It is possible, however, for authors and illustrators to improve the quality of their integrated visuals. A child's picture world should be moving away from appeasement to genuine integration; away from token to multiple integration. Brown faces should be shown acting out various roles in life. Indeed, the new editions of the traditional mother goose and fairy tales should have some colored faces. There can be a Brownilocks as well as a Goldilocks while Little Boy Blue, Donald Duck and Little Miss Muffett could be as charming with chocolate skin as with golden skin.

We must begin to realize how the oasis syndrome contributes to the sub-rosa effects of prejudice. The more we see of the oasis syndrome, the more supportive it becomes to the idea that Blacks can be tolerated in small numbers and that their presence is acceptable as long as they are assimilated and submerged into the masses. A sensitive author who is concerned about changing the image of children's literature will be aware of the need to make a book's pictorial environment richly heterogeneous.

Ostrich-in-the-Sand Syndrome

This syndrome is consistently found in fiction stories attempting to demonstrate acts of prejudice and discrimination. As a thematic idea, prejudice is rarely dealt with in American literature although one might expect it to be a major theme because it is a deeply rooted phenomenon. Unfortunately, the few books undertaking this topic are not good. As our book reviews show, we do not recommend most of the books that deal with some incidence

of prejudice. They tend to give a distorted, unreal and oversimplified point of view, indicating what we identify as the ostrich-in-the-sand approach. Because it tends to warp the mind, a book displaying this syndrome would have been better left unwritten. The ostrich syndrome occurs when the author avoids too many fragments of reality and deals flirtatiously with the issues of racism and prejudice. Overall, the story suffers from the author's inability to deal honestly with the nature of prejudice. The paradox that accompanies this syndrome is that the author intends to deal with prejudices, but does so in a such a way as to perpetuate the very ideas that he intended to eliminate.

By oversimplifying an issue or ignoring a situation of prejudice, the story becomes deceitful. Oftentimes, the story is so written so that it implies that prejudice based on color or status is a natural and acceptable way of behaving. The author achieves this by an omission of certain facts. In other instances, the story gives an inadequate explanation of prejudice and fails to clarify the irrational but real defense mechanisms that accompany prejudice.

Seldom are Black characters portrayed with a full range of emotions. Most often they are shown to be either passive and accommodating or violently aggressive. Very often they are stilted and they are seldom, if ever, motivated to react against prejudice because it has affronted their sense of personal dignity.

In No Mules, a picture book by Papas, a "No Blacks" sign appears abruptly in the story. It is posted over a store entrance. At no point in the story is an explanation of the sign offered. This leaves the child with the impression that no explanation is necessary. The child will then infer that the sign "belongs." Admittedly, some white people in Africa and the United States have had the privilege to deny Blacks certain accommodations. However, children deserve some explanation--a frame of reference; otherwise they can assume that this is right and proper rather than the result of political exploitation. (See review.)

In Fun for Chris (Randall), young children are presented a social situation in which a Black child and a white child become friends and eventually confront the question of what makes for differences in skin color. What we have found objectionable in this story is not so much the way in which the author explains this phenomenon, but the inequitable manner in which she develops the Black and white characters.

A considerable portion of the story and illustrations are devoted to an elaboration of the white child's personality and family life, while the Black child appears belatedly in the story as a listless, flat character, whose own family is neither shown nor mentioned. While the white child is curious about what makes the Black child's skin different, the author does not allow the Black child to display a similar curiousity about the white child. Rather, the Black youngster is used as a vehicle to satisfy the white child's curiousity and to provide the reader--apparently the white reader--with a better understanding of why Black people are black. Thus the notorious idea that Black people's color must be explained is given credence. However, well-intentioned the purpose, this kind of literary exploitation ultimately serves to reinforce the feeling that a Black child's life and concerns are less important and real than his white counterpart's. (See review.)

Bright April is another good example of a book which treats the issue of prejudice in an unsatisfactory way. Throughout the story, April is a victim of prejudice at the hands of her white peers. However, the white children are never chastised for their prejudiced behavior. Although they are silenced by adults, they are implicitly protected and no explanation is given for their behavior. (See Chapter 4)

New Boy in School (Justus) attempts to deal with school integration. Lonnie, the new boy, is a Black child knotted up with intense fears, which, in the overall context of the story seem unnecessary. He is the only Black child in a white school. He is treated with extreme courtesy and thoughtfulness. There is literally no act of discrimination to justify the boy's anxieties. The author does not show why the boy is nervous. She does not acknowledge acts of group violence and personal harrassment which can and do occur with school integration.

In this story, integration is made to seem like a smooth lullaby and the boy's fears seem to be unwarranted. The white children are paragons of virtue. The author does not at any point call attention to the rudeness and insensitivity fairly common to school integration that might explain the Black child's sense of insecurity. Again, by vomitting certain realities, the author's ostrich approach leaves a false impression. One is left with the impression that this author has not presented an honest picture of the experiences of Black people in this society or of the ways in which racism and prejudice shape that experience.

Equally, this story offers a model of school integration based upon the assimilation of one or a few Black youngsters into an all white setting. In the process, the Black youngsters must deny their own identity to become accepted. Lonnie's absorption into this setting is symbolized by his recognition that the color of his skin is no longer of importance to him or his peers. (See review.)

Clearly, this kind of school integration represents only one of a number of possible solutions--perhaps the least acceptable because of its implications for Black people.

In sum, it has been our observation that most books which attempt to deal with racism or discriminatory situations fail miserably, chiefly because they are burdened down with the white perspective.* Because of the failures of existing books in handling discrimination or integration themes, this is a fertile field for new authors to explore.

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* Though this study does not deal with the issues of sexism, it is also clear that the role of women is limited and stereotyped in children's books. This applies to Black-inclusive books as well as the larger realm of juvenile literature.

Chapter 4

Bright April: A Critique of a Classic

Despite its high reputation, Bright April (de Angeli)* seems to be the classic example of an unsatisfactory book for children. Because it exemplifies most of the syndromes and some other undesirable features, we offer an in-depth critique of this popular story.

Basically, the Bright April story involves a nine-year-old Black child and some ordinary experiences in school and in a Brownie troop, culminating in a birthday part for her. The author is well-known and writes beautifully in this book as she does in her other stories for children.

Nevertheless, throughout the story, April is subjected to prejudice, mostly from her white peers. There is a woeful abdication of responsibility on the part of adults in this story, and the author allows April to become the target of racism without any supportive explanation.

In one of the early scenes, April is reciting in class and indicates that she would like to be

> ...a hairdresser and the boss of a big store on Chestnut. She airily sat up and tossed her head. One of the girls laughed and said, 'You? Why, they never let...' But she got no farther for Mrs. Cole [the teacher] quickly slipped her hand over the [white] child's mouth.

This scene, though unfortunate, is a true reflection of life. It serves to illustrate once common attitudes that may be somehwat diminishing. It also illustrates how white people, including children, exercise the freedom to invoke prejudice on Blacks in the most routine of situation. The most disturbing point is how the

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* Its reading level starts at fourth grade and therefore it is not included in our bibliography.

author deals with this situation, since it is typical of how the book deals with racism and April. In the above scene, the racism of the white child is first silenced and then protected, while the Black child's feelings go unnoticed. Neither in real life nor in fiction should adults be allowed to deal with a prejudice in this manner. It is an ostrich-in-the-sand approach.

Though this incident might have happened just as it was dramatized, an author has freedom to add or expand on life situations. A novelist is not simply a reporter. He is in control of all dimentions of his story and he should not pass over injustices as if his characters were the ultimate forces in life.

Time and time again, whenever April encounters prejudice, the author allows adults to take the ostrich approach. The white children are not chastised for their prejudiced behavior. They are not told that they are acting offensively or unfairly. Nor is there any explanation given for their behavior.

April, however, is constantly instructed to do her best, to be patient, to be understanding, to turn the other cheek. She is urged to accommodate herself to the racism of whites and to suffer in tranquility. Her teacher, her parents and her scout leader--all the authority figures--admonish her to subvert any reaction.

The ultimate message of Bright April seems to prescribe a formula of success for Blacks. They should

a) prove themselves to whites by being better, working harder and cooperating

b) ignore insults and wear the mantle of interminable forgiveness

c) repress anger and restrain any show of emotion

d) be clean and neat.

The implications are clear and the story gives out a false message because clean, neat, well-scented, patient, unemotional Blacks have not overcome racism.

In still other situations, April wonders why her brother has to remain an army cook instead of working in architecture as would be consistent with his training and amibiton. She also wonders why "someone else is appointed postmaster instead of Papa," although he has seniority and credentials. There is no attempt to explain these incongruities, though an explanation could have come from other characters, especially her parents; or through certain evolving incidents; or through an author-injected explanation. April merely agonizes. The treatment of these types of situations is clearly irresponsible.

The tragedy of this story is that it offers no message for the improvement of white behavior. White children and adults are allowed to misbehave with impunity. The Black child acts well, works diligently, has verve and enthusiasm; she is a model child. She is not rewarded, but she is maligned and made to suffer.

The ending scene further demonstrates the racist and patronizing attitude that pervades a good part of the book. A white child refuses to sit next to April at a birthday party because April is "colored." Later, the white child is allowed to feel April's nose, eyes, and mouth to determine if April is real; she then enjoins April's friendship after going through this dreadful animalistic "touch and feel" game. When April returns home, she relates this situation to her mother who then pronounces a pious platitude of Christianity.

This final scene is the moment of supreme irony because the story has violated the cardinal principles of brotherhood and love and by so doing, has made Christianity irrelevant to it.

> 'you see, Mama,' April exclaimed, 'she didn't know the truth about me at all. She didn't know at first that my skin is just like hers, only a different color, and she didn't know that good care you take to keep my clothes nice and clean, and she didn't know how I like to read just as she does! I guess if she had known the truth about me, she would have liked me at first.' April laughed in sheer joy at remembering her new friend.

'Yes,' agreed Mama soberly. 'Yes, that is just it, exactly. She didn't know the truth. We must know the truth, always, even when it hurts. The Bible says, 'Ye shall know the TRUTH, and the truth shall make you free.'

In summary, the overwhelming faults of this book seem to be that it is written from a white perspective, with little attempt to empathize with the dilemma and feelings of the Black child.

Bright April is a popular book for bibliographies. It is a standard title for public and school libraries and it is not unusual to find two or three copies there. Sometimes it is the only book about a Black child in a library's repertoire. Thoughtful educators will want to reconsider its disadvantages and faults. In our opinion, it does a severe injustice to the Black experience and it not recommended for general reading.

Chapter 5

Review of Books for Pre-School Through Third Grade

This section is composed of a bibliography of books appropriate for young children of pre-school age through third grade reading level. Each title is accompanied by a critique, which shows whether the book is Recommended or Not Recommended. The criteria listed in the previous chapter have been applied to these books. The reviews illustrate how the criteria become functioning agents in judging a book. The review critiques are also useful to teachers and librarians who want to have some sound basis for selecting books that are integrated.

The uniqueness of this bibliography is that it includes title which we have some reservations about and a detailed critique of each. We could have simply omitted books which were not impressive or books which seemed offensive in some way. Instead, we have attempted to be inclusive rather than "selective." Moreover, we have attempted to be quite specific in our reviews and provide some critical comment on what we deemed to be the book's usefulness or its limitations.

Most bibligraphies, particularly the ethnic ones we have seen, simply list titles and sometimes provide a short synopsis. They do not sift out books or if they do, the reader has no way of knowing which ones were "selected out" nor why.

Each critique is the result of a painstaking examination using the criteria outlined in Chapter 2. If any book exemplified anoticeable quality, we identified it as a fault or a merit. Ultimately, we judged a book unacceptable if a number of faults appearedin the book and if its overall effect did not seem to produce healthy images and constructive ideas for children to absorb. In our opinion, the "not recommended" books should be carefully considered before they are made available to children. The detractions and detrimental qualities of "not recommended" books seem to outweigh whatever advantage it might appear to have as a multi-ethnic book.

A Crocodile Has Me By The Leg
Leonard W. Doob
Walker & Co., 1966

Most impressive about this book of poems is the personality of the woodcuts warm, colorful and etched by a Nigerian artist. We highly recommend it for primary readers for several reasons: the frequent use of animal imagery will be fresh and appealing to American children, all of the poems are short, and sometimes amusing; quite a few can be read alone by young children, but those in the last half of the book seem too advanced for them.

Some technical deficiencies should be called to attention, although they do not seriously affect the quality of the anthology. It is unfortunate that these poems have to remain anonymous: this is one way in which African languages can become familiar to the Western world. Sometimes the poems seem to be stilted, disconnected fragments, more prose like than lyrical or narrative. Undoubtedly, this can be attributed to the fact that some poems have been translated from the original African language, perhaps as many as three or four times -- from Swahilli to French to English.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Teachers will enjoy using it.

Abraham Lincoln
Ingrid and Edgar d'Aulaire
Doubleday, 1939, 1957

In general, this biography is an over-romanticized portrayal of a man who is made to seem superhuman and flawless, even during his childhood. Its pictures seem terribly unreal and do not reflect the hardships and struggles, much a part of this president's life.

Because the authors are well known, we feel that the acceptability of this book will be taken for granted by many. Furthermore, it was awarded the Caldecott Medal for 1940 and libraries tend to have 3 or 4 copies currently on the shelves. This is unfortunate.

The book does a disservice to Lincoln and his involvement with Black and Indian people. Both groups are depicted in the illustrations as the "white man's burden." After the Emancipation Proclamation is issued, Blacks are shown kneeling at Lincoln's feet while he maintains a detached, uncaring posture of arrogance. Earlier, Lincoln is shown as a strongman who protects what is illustrated as a timid, helpless Indian chief. This chief is about to be attacked by some white soldiers who are shown reeling with blood-thirsty rage, brandishing their swords in order to defend a land settlement with the Indians. The text corroborates the "white man's burden" concept. It implies that the survival of the exploited is dependent on the mercy of a god in the form of Lincoln. The incident, of course, is pure fiction and the way it is dramatized substantiates its false credibility.

Blacks are illustrated as rigid figures, their immovable faces a dense impenetrable mass of black clay, pierced slightly by two white dots. This is a ghost-like portrayal which will frighten children instead of invoking compassion and understanding for Black people who lived in agony. Still another picture of an Indian man shows the "savage" image--he is jumping up and down in perpetual motion.

It is interesting to note that the story does not deal with violence except with the Indian incident. Indeed, it does not even cover Lincoln's assasination but ends after the Emancipation Proclamation.

We find that the entry of Black slaves into the story is abrupt and their condition is made to seem acceptable, not repulsive nor contradictory to the demoncracy that Lincoln was later to govern. After a New Orleans trip, Lincoln's neighbors "never tire of hearing about the river pirates and slave markets." Thus slavery is made to seem like a fairy tale rather than a social evil over which his neighbors should have been indignant. To add insult to injury, the authors continue by saying that Abe "was glad to be North again to his Indiana home where everyone was free." This is flagrant dishonesty. Among other atrocities, Blacks were disenfranchised at this time in Indiana. Furthermore, such a statement makes it seem as if slavery were a sectional issue--indeed a local color story--rather than a national issue of shattering proportions.

We must also comment that this matter of having the South absorb the full blame for the condition of Black people is quite common; but it is an evasive technique. It distorts, is grossly unfair and should no longer be tolerated in literature and history.

This book also exemplifies a fault common to other books. It does not identify the slave master or trader as white. Two terms are used: "Negro (or Black) slaves" on the one hand while everybody else is referred to as "people."

Overall this book makes a plastic hero of Lincoln instead of a thoughtful human being caught up in the politics of his time. We have pointed out some of the ways in which it mistreats Blacks and the issue of slavery as well as Indians and land treaties. As such, it will easily reinforce the classic myth of white superiority and we do not recommend its use under any condition.

Reading level, grades 3-5.

The Adventures of Spider
Joyce Cooper Arkhurst
Little, Brown, 1964

A wonderful book that explains some peculiarities about spiders, e.g., reasons for their baldness. These six fables come from Ghana and Liberia and the humor should appeal to all ages. They make excellent read

aloud material for children below grade three and capable students would enjoy reading these minitales themselves. The book is also important because it helps children get acquainted with everyday customs in Africa and with African names.

Drawings are colorful and slightly stylistic: the faces don't seem to resemble West African people as they tend to have European profiles.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 2 - 4.

The Africans Know
Tillie S. Pine and Joseph Levine
McGraw Hill, 1967

A superb book that introduces young readers to the technology and art of Ancient Africa. Among other things, it shows how they smelted iron and invented the lost wax process which produced some of the world's finest sculpture. The excellent color drawings by Ann Grifalconi make profuse use of earth colors and further bring out the riches of the early African genuis. The book counteracts the false but common ignoble image of Africans. It is unique in that it concentrates on what African people have given to the world rather than on animal life as many juvenile books do.

Still another bonus for teachers and young readers alike is the triple fold approach: the book explains the original method developed by Africans, compares this to a similar process used in modern technology and finally recommends a simple do-it-yourself project for the reader.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for the science units and art classes for grades K - 6.

African Myths
Carter G. Woodson
Associated Publishers, 1964

Since Africa is traditionally excluded from readings in mythology, this book is sorely needed. It simply is a collection of short and long fables from various African cultures, simplified and retold by a noted Black historian. Food, dress, money, social habits and habits of animals -- these come through in various fables. Children can learn that palm oil and cowry shells are used as money in parts of Africa, for example. Such information widens the child's knowledge of Africa and non-white customs..

Highly recommended as a valuable resource for teachers of all grades, though its vocabulary is too mature for early readers.

Agossou, Boy of Africa
Dominique Darbois
Follett Publishing Co., 1962

This book explores a day in the life of a West African family whose son, Agossou, helps his parents harvest food, plays games with them and goes to market. It is neither an exciting nor a helpful book.

Photographs are abundant, but there seems to be little rapport between the village people and the photographer-author, despite her claims to the contrary. Most of the children look distrustful.

The book's main fault is that the author is short on enthusiasm or appreciation for her subject matter. Her presentation will not enable children to respect the life-style of these African people. She constantly makes a comparison between American customs and African traditions. For example, she points out that an African house does not have chimneys or tables and chairs "like ours." Not all people need to live like Americans and it is invidious for a children's book to treat other cultures in a comparative manner. Some photographs show children in the nude or with bloated bellies. Western children deserve an explanation for these photographs, but none appears in the text.

The author refers to Africa as a "dark continent" because parts of it "have never been explored by man." This is an outright racist statement. Her meaning of man undoubtedly is confined to the white man: African men know Africa. Furthermore, it is anachronistic to use "dark continent" when a beautiful and enduring heritage of African countries is re-emerging.

Aside from its condescending tone, the book is plodding and wordy.

In reading this book, a sensitive teacher or parent will find other negative traits. It is NOT RECOMMENDED for use in any manner or on any level. Several other books present segments of African life in a more graceful yet forthright, and real way.

All About Us
Eva Knox Evans
Capitol, 1947

This book deserves the attention of every child because of the remarkable insight it offers about the way people behave. The author's frame of reference is that differences in people are natural and desirable. On this basis she explains how early man divided into groups; the scientific chemistry that accounts for the differences in skin color, blood, hair textures; why people adopt various social manners; and how people deal with emotions like anger and racial prejudice. Her style is simple, yet vibrant and most parents will appreciate the information given here that can dispel a wide variety of myths.

Advanced third graders can read this book alone, but younger children will enjoy hearing it read.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for all grades and ages and available in a Golden Press paperback.

All The Children of The World
Helen Doss
Abingdon, 1958

This book purports to present children of different nationalities and cultures, all under the watchful eye of God. Apparently the intention of the author was to convey the brotherhood of man but as the illustrator shows all the world's children as fair skinned and looking very much alike the author's objective will not be reached and the book may have exactly the opposite effect on children.

NOT RECOMMENDED

And I Must Hurry for the Sea Is Coming In. . .
George Mendoza
Prentice-Hall, n.d.

As one of the most exciting books in the children's field, "And I Must Hurry. . ." contains gorgeous photographs of the sea at dusk and close-ups of a Black child who enjoys being at the helm of a boat for a short while. In contrast, his water recreation is ordinarily limited to a tiny plastic boat and a fire hydrant in front of his ramshackled tenement, as the last two photographs show.

The book has one line of poetry per page, while both the photos and words make a fantastic impression on the mind.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for all ages.

The Art of Africa
Shirley Glubok
Harper and Row, 1965

This book gives an excellent coverage of the history and use of African art forms. The discussion includes a wide variety such as the masks, murals, figurines, pottery, the lost wax process and musical instruments. Unfortunately, the large size photographs are not in color which would enhance the beauty of the objects. However, the careful explanations in the text compensate for this.

Actually, the text seems too difficult for grade three and under, but we include The Art of Africa in this bibliography because of its superb presentation and because it can be useful to teachers, especially art teachers, as a resource for all children.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for all grades.

Atu, The Silent One
Frank Jupo
Holiday House, Inc., 1967

This story concerns Atu, an African boy, and the way he and his people, called Bushmen, might have lived many years ago. An interesting and informative text accompanied by colorful illustrations.

Preschool through 3rd grade.

Becky
Julia Wilson
Crowell, 1966

What happens when the only doll that a girl wants is too expensive -- that's the mystery unfolded in this book about Becky, a Black child who goes shopping the day after her birthday.

An engrossing story for the advanced primary reader. Illustrations are in color.

Beef Stew
Barbara Brenner
Knopf, 1965

Nicky's anxious to find someone who will come to his house for a beef stew dinner. He searches among peers and public officials -- one of whom is a Black librarian -- but all are too busy.

There is a noticeable difference between the treatment accorded the garbage collector and the other public workers encountered by Nick. All these adults are friendly and understanding except for the garbageman; he is scornful and unfriendly in facial expression and words. We wonder if this unintentionally assigns a low status to this occupation and in effect helps to promote a disdainful attitude towards garbagemen in the minds of children.

For grades 2 and 3.

Beeswax Catches a Thief
Ann Kirn
Norton, 1968

There are no people in this fable adapted from a Congo folktale; instead, the stage is set for a menagerie of African animals to dramatize a moral. Beeswax is the hero turtle while the villian is a jackal. The animals use a carefully planned but fast moving strategy in catching the water thief in the story. This is well as the delightful illustrations should have high appeal for children.

RECOMMENDED for grades 2 - 5.

Benjie
Joan M. Lexau
Dial Press, 1964

Benjie lives with his grandmother in a city apartment. All the people in this book come alive, especiallv Benjie who troubles himself to find his Grandmother's favorite earring. The fact that Benjie is Black comes out through the illustrations; his shyness through the story. The book has excellent characterizations and authentic scenes depicting city life.

RECOMMENDED for grades 1-4.

Benjie on His Own
Joan M. Lexau
The Dial Press, 1970

Benjie is distressed to find his grandmother is ill and in need of hospitalization after she fails to meet him at school. However, he manages to get help for her and ends up staying with friendly neighbors while she is in the hospital.

A realistic and moving story about the fears and anxieties of a Black youngster confronted with a series of difficult situations which he manages to cope with through his own ingenuity and the help of neighbors and friends. Sensitive drawings reveal an urban setting, tenement houses, and a variety of people.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 1-4.

Big Cowboy Western
Ann Herbert Scott
Lothrop, 1965

A five year old Black boy gets a gun and holster set for his birthday; to complement this, he is allowed to watch over a horse--a rare treat for a city boy who lives in a housing project.

The story itself has a magnetic appeal to children because the author has made little Martin warm and likeable and has developed an intricate plot with enough tiny surprises to hold a child's attention. This also makes for a good read-aloud story. However, it is

unfortunate that guns are made attractive in this story and for those who prefer to deemphasize toys of violence, this should be taken into account. It is also a book where the only man in this Black boy's life is a white fruit and vegetable peddler who canvases the project daily, and entrusts his horse to Martin.

It is appropriate for grades 2 and 3.

The Big Pile of Dirt
Eleanor Clymer
Rinehart and Winston, 1968

This vibrant story shows how some city children took the iniative to secure a playground for themselves. The story also reflects some of the real hardships of the urban poor, but most of all we get an idea of the inventive and creative minds of poor children. Two dualities seem to make this story exceptionally appealing to children: it is narrated by a child in unpretentious, yet colorful language and the bold illustrations are expressionistic and warm without blurring the blackness and whiteness of the people involved.

RECOMMENDED for advanced primary readers.

Binky Brothers, Detectives
James Lawrence
Harper & Row, 1968

Chub's baseball mit disappears and with the help of his friend Pinky and Pinky's younger brother, Dinky, the mystery is solved. Children will enjoy the unravelling of this story as the members of one baseball team eventually outsmart and outplay the other team. Two of the characters in the story, Chub and Joe Parker, are Black youngsters.

Appropriate for K-3.

Birthday Presents
Eugene Fern
Farrar, 1967

Small and colorful picture book showing a variety of birthday presents received by individual children in Joseph's city neighborhood. Joe receives a song which

is printed in the book and which he later gives to the whole world. Good representation of Black faces throughout the story.

For pre-schoolers through 2nd grade.

Black and White
David Arkin
Ritchie,Press, 1966

Using the 1954 Supreme Court decision as its focus, this picture book attempts to simplify that event. Its faults are numerous.

By reducing the decision to a catechism, the book undercuts a child's potential understanding of a historic case. Moreover, the author conveys a sense of paternalism. The emphasis is on nine justices who assume the image of the "great white father" dispensing some measure of freedom and equality to Black people. This amounts to a distortion of history. By disregarding the political initiative historically exerted by Blacks, one can conclude that they have played a passive role in their own fight for freedom.

Its poetic style is extremely monotonous. The drawings are dreary and humdrum as it attempts to portray a Black and a white child exactly alike. The emphasis on black and white goes to the extreme. Samples:

The board is black; the chalk is white.

Their robes are black; their hair is white.

Black and White was written for pre-school through second grade level, but it is NOT RECOMMENDED for use.

The Black BC's
Lucille Clifton
E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970

Each page in this book helps tell the story of Black history and achievements in America. This is done very effectively by means of a short poem on each page plus a few short factual paragraphs on the same subject. The illustrations are well chosen and clearly portray the subject matter of each page. This Black poet accomplishes (continued on the next page).

much more effectively the same tasks attempted by many less successful history books.

The reading level is about grades 4-6 but this should be in every classroom as a resource book, to be interpreted by the teacher at her discretion.

Black is Beautiful
Ann McGovern
Four Winds Press, 1969

Black and white photographs accompany simple lines of poetry. Both extol the beauty of blackness in people and nature. Appealing to all ages. A good book for the home, too.

Black Means
Barney Grossman
Hill and Wang, 1970

This book is designed to give new positive meaning and depth to the word "black", thereby counter-acting the negative uses of the word which are so persistent in our language. The images presented here, e.g. "black is as rich as the earth, black is as tough as a bull" were formulated by students in a primarily Black and Puerto Rican school in Bronx, New York, and illustrated by Black artist Charles Bible.

This is a powerful book and should have a positive effect on children . Suitable for all grades.

Booker T. Washington: Leader of His People
Lillie G. Patterson
Garrard, 1962

From slaveboy to college president at age twenty-five--these were the dynamics of Washington's life. This simplified biography succeeds in presenting a compassionate portrait of a statesman of American education.

The strongest point of the book seems to be that the author has compressed many little known facts about Washington into a juvenile reader, without becoming humdrum. Its weakest point is that it doesn't present a well-rounded picture. Washington is shown as an unqualified success around the world. The substantial

opposition that he encountered is overlooked. To this extent, the book is romanticized. If used as a resource in the classroom--and it should be--the teacher should be aware of the positive and negative dimensions of Washington's leadership for Black Americans. Color illustrations.

RECOMMENDED for grades 2-4.

Bowmar Early Childhood Series (see individual titles below)
Bowmar Publishing Corp.

Close-up photographs are used in most of these thirty books. They are vivid and most appealing to children because of the real life experiences emphasized and the brilliant colors that make each picture seem like a jewel. The text is minimal. About seven of the title have integrated photographs of Black and white children and adults. Many more contain Oriental, Indian and Spanish faces, and one of the books is written in Spanish. They are superb books for preschool children.

All thirty are HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for school use in kindergarten and first grade to expose children to faces other than the blond, blue-eyed child that most children are trained to see as normal by most classroom instructional material.

Some of those which use Black people are as follows:

Father is Big by Ed Radlauer (1968)

Three Baby Chicks by Ruth Jaynes (1968)

Furry Boy by Marian Crume (1969)

Listen by Marian Crume (1968)

Do You Know What by Ruth Jaynes (1968)

Let Me See You Try by Marian Crume (1968)

Me by Beth Clure and Helen Rumsey (1968)

Boy of the Maisai
Natalie Donna
Dodd, Mead and Co., 1964

This is the story of Supati of Nairobi. On his ninth birthday his uncle takes him to visit the village where he was born, a village where the Maisai people still keep their old ways. Here he sees the way he would have lived if his family had not moved to the city.

The book describes and photographs some aspects of African life that might be strange and exotic to children; for example, some people are shown drinking a custard made of milk and blood and the Maisai dance warriors perform in full regalia. Yet, all children can identify with the hero. Moreover, since he approaches his people's customs with respect, it will be easy for American children to respect them.

By presenting old and modern features of Nairobi through its photographs, this book offers a balanced view of contemporary Africa.

RECOMMENDED for grades 1-4.

Bronzeville Boys and Girls
Gwendolyn Brooks
Harper and Row, 1956

A classic collection of beautiful, tiny poems for young children written by a woman who is also Black and a Pulitzer Prize winner. Most poems have a child's name for the title capturing the joys and sadness peculiar to childhood. Many of them can be read alone by early readers.

Although these poems are universal, certain qualities within the book suggest that they originated within the Afro-American culture. Most noticeable is the line drawings of characters whose delicate profiles and curly hair texture suggests Black children. "Bronzeville", Miss Brooks has created a descriptive name for Black communities; she uses it quite creatively and perhaps it ought to readily replace the non-descript term "ghetto."

The Bronze Zoo
Shay Rieger
Scribner, 1970

This picture book focuses on some bronze sculptures created for a garden in Harlem. The artist explains the way she went about making these animal sculptures from sketches of real animals. The photographs include pictures of children from various ethnic groups who visit the garden and touch the animals.

RECOMMENDED for primary grades K-3.

The Case of the Cat's Meow (1965)
The Case of the Dumbells (1966)
The Case of the Hungry Stranger (1963)
Crosby Bonsall
Harper

All of these books involve five boys who delight in chasing down mysteries in their backyards, e.g. a cat's meow. As part of the "I Can Read" series, they have controlled, repetitive vocabularies. Similar to the traditional Dick and Jane readers except that the settings are updated. For this reason Skinny, a Black kid, appears in the illustrations.

Suitable for grades 1 and 2.

Charles Drew
Roland Bertol
Crowell, 1970

This excellent biography makes good reading about the man who pioneered a method for preserving blood. Dr. Drew, an eminent scientist in spite of the constant roadblocks of racial discrimination that he encountered as a boy, as a college athlete and finally from his white fellow scientists. The book fails to point out the irony of his death in that he died because of segregated hospital facilities that would not give him access to blood which he was responsible for preserving. Nevertheless it is a fascinating story, well told and inspiring for the would-be scientist.

RECOMMENDED for grades 2 and 3.

Children of Africa
Nina Millen
Friendship Press, 1959

Huge, one-per-page pictures dominate this book. They are handsome enough for framing and show African parents and children engaged in work or play. On the back of each picture, there is a self-contained story such as "Benji at the River," "Bangu, the Good Hunter," and "The Twins' Song" among others. Bright colors, outdoor scenes and handsome people are highlights of the pictures. Although the people are unmistakeably portrayed with dark skins, children may or may not notice that the pictures do not resemble Africans as much as they could. Seemingly, this is attributed to the illustrator's overuse of "realism."

RECOMMENDED for pre-school through grade 3.

Christmas Gif'
Charlemae Rollins
Follett, 1963

An anthology of Christmas poems, songs and stories written by and about Black people which provides the reader with an interesting and colorful sketch of some of the Christmas traditions which developed mostly during the time of slavery.

Appropriate for all age levels.

City Rhythms
Ann Grafalconi
Bobbs-Merrill, 1965

Jimmy Peters, an urban Black child, finds musical sounds in the hustle and bustle of cars and people outside his city apartment. He and his multi-ethnic playmates create a rhythm band out of street junk. Realistic and full-sized drawings filled with earthcolors, will hold attention of non-readers, but text can be read alone by 2nd and 3rd graders. Many appealing scenes show how the city child makes up his games to fit a congested environment.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

City Workers
Jeanne A. Rowe
Franklin Watts, Inc., 1969

An excellent photographic essay of the different kinds of city workers accompanied by an informative text which describes what various workers do. The photos are well integrated and are particularly good in that they show Black people as well as white performing a variety of important functions.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades K-3.

The Clever Turtle
A. K. Roche
Prentice-Hall, 1969

Most impressive about this book is the woodcuts; they seem to give a sense of movement on the page; they are colorful and portray the African styles of clothes very well. The story is a traditional folk tale showing how the turtle outwits his enemies; simple and short, it seems to be a prototype of the brer rabbit folklore.

For pre-schoolers through 6th grade.

Clifford Gets a Job
Norman Bridwell
Scholastic, 1968

This paperback reader concerns Clifford, a huge dog. His love for food requires that he acquire a job. He volunteers to work for the police who in turn provide ample food for him. Pictures, in which some Black children appear, are used generously.

For pre-school through grade 2.

The Coconut Thieves
Adapted by Catherine Fournier
Scribner, 1968

Who are the coconut thieves? A turtle and a dog. They are the central characters in this transcription of a delightful African folktale. It is a good animal story, using a theme familiar to fables wherein the small animals outwit larger and stronger ones. Children of all ages might enjoy the cleverness of the turtle and the surrealistic drawings. Children ages 8-10 can handle the reading text.

Congo Boy: An African Folktale
Retold by Mollie Clarke
Scholastic, 1965

This story revolves around a young African boy who wants to obtain his own spear so that he may go hunting with his father.

Both the illustrations and the text exude a sense of rhythm and color that should enhance a child's appreciation of African customs. It is a thin paperback that makes for easy handling for children.

This excellent translation retains many of the characteristics that give mythical stories an appeal to all ages. It has a wish-fulfillment theme; the hero is a maverick-like character, hardworking and charitable, who encounters many different people as he travels over the Congolese countryside; his experiences are constantly repeated. In effect this provides a controlled vocabulary for the 2-3rd grade reader, yet there is much vitality and variety within the plot.

Corduroy
Don Freeman
Viking Press, 1968

A simple warm story for very young children about a little girl who found a teddy bear and a teddy bear who found her. Colorful illustrations show that Lisa, the little girl and her mother are Black. All other faces are white, including the clowns and dolls on the shelf, the policeman, salespeople and customers. Some of these could and should have been Black.

RECOMMENDED as a read-aloud story for pre-schoolers through 2nd grade.

Counting Carnival
Feenie Ziner
Coward McCann, 1962

This book consists of simple counting rhymes for very young readers. Busy and lively illustrations depict a crowded urban environment.

The book purports to show "children of all races [playing] happily together" but it presents only white-skinned children. Curly hair on some of the characters suggests that the illustrator intended to portray Black youngsters but his reluctance to show real Black children surely diminishes the book's stated intention.

Pre-school and 1st grade.

The Cowboy
John Peterson
Scholastic, 1967

The cowboy and his friend, Navajo Joe, spend a day getting rid of outlaws on the ranch and in town. The cowboy is a small Black boy and Navajo Joe is his cat. Their real errand is buying groceries for the boy's mother but reality and fantasy are cleverly mixed with "real" cowboy talk to produce an adventure that should appeal to all young children. The story is set in a small town and features both Black and white characters with the Black characters in significant roles.

K-2.

Crocodile and Hen
Joan M. Lexau
Harper & Row, 1969

An African folktale explaining why crocodiles do not eat hens is retold here in an interesting and humorous manner for young readers. No reference is made to Africa as the setting for this all-animal story. Only in the introductory remarks on the inside flap of the book jacket is the information revealed that this tale is from Bokongo, Africa. Perhaps this fact should be pointed out for some readers.

This would be a delightful tale to read aloud to young children. K-2.

Days I Like
Lucy Hawkinson
Albert Whitman, 1965

With few words and many illustrations, both in color and black and white, this book describes the activities of each month. It is aimed primarily at pre-school children and would probably be of little interest to 1-3. Although the book seems at first glance to be integrated, only two of the light-skinned children pictured are Black. This is a good example of token integration.

Pre-school through 1st grade.

Do You Know What
Ruth Jaynes
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

The Dog Who Came To Dinner
Sidney Taylor
Follett, 1966

New neighborhors are invited for dinner and arrive accompanied by a large dog. the dog's "table manners" begin to cause problems until all discover that the dog is an uninvited guest, a stranger to both families.

Good illustrations show the new neighbors are Black. The book teaches neighborliness in action. It should hold a child's interest because of the dog's antics.

Don't You Turn Back
Langston Hughes
Alfred Knopf, 1969

This is a collection of beautiful poems written by Langston Hughes which are especially appropriate for young readers. The dramatic woodcut illustrations convey the many aspects and moods of the Black man's struggle for freedom which is mainly the theme in all of the poems.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for all ages.

The Drinking Gourd
F. N. Monjo
Harper & Row, 1970

The story of a black family's escape to freedom via the underground railroad with the help of a white family. One of the few successful books which provides a straightforward explanation of the immorality of slavery and the unjust laws that supported it, in terms which young children can understand. The black and white characters are developed in a realistic way with no attempt to glorify the role of the whites or to minimize the courage and dignity of the Black family.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 1-3.

Duee-A Boy of Liberia
G. Warren Schloat, Jr.
Alfred Knopf, Inc. 1962

It is a very sensitively handled book about life in a Liberian village. Duee (pronounced Dewey) is illustrated with photographs and the captions tell the story of the boy's family and their work, his recreation and education. It offers positive identification for any child and could easily be used throughout grades 2-4. It introduces another culture to children in a respectful way; it shows that life, no matter how simply by our standards can be special and dignified. The photographs throughout accent Duee's life style. This book is a good example of the kind of book all children should be exposed to.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for all age levels.

Ed and Ted : A Story About Two Boys Who Became Friends
Florine Robinson
Exposition Press, 1965

This is a simple story of two little boys, one Black and one white, who are neighbors and friends. Apparently the author intended to show that the boys are exactly alike in every aspect of their lives except skin color and therefore equal.

The book is extremely dull, with wooden characters and a story line that is simplistic to the point of insulting a child's intelligence. The story seems merely a vehicle for making the author's point yet it may have just the opposite effect as children may well draw the conclusion that in order to be equal, people must be exactly alike. Further, by stating this thesis over and over the author gives the assumption that something was wrong with one of the boys.

Finally, the pictures of the children are grey. The intended Black child resembles a Caucasian standing in a shadow. Written for ages 5-7.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Every Man Heart Lay Down
Lorenz Graham
Crowell, 1970

This book contains Bible stories told in the language of "Africans who have newly-learned English," according to the explanation on the book jacket. This Liberian-English dialect will be difficult for children to understand. The book, however, could be used by a creative teacher interested in African historical backgrounds.

The illustrations are unique and striking, some in bright colors and some in black and white. Because of the dialect used and the subject matter, i.e., mostly stories about the birth of Jesus, Mary's virginity and related ideas, only very restricted use of this book is recommended after careful examination of it by the teacher.

Evan's Corner
Elizabeth Starr Hill
Holt, 1967

A good story of a boy who found a room of his own, despite the fact that eight people are crowded into his family's apartment. Evan is Black and effervescent and, happily, children will easily identify with him.

The illustrations are good, though it should be mentioned that all the storekeepers and teachers are white. Some of these should have been non-whites to show Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans and other distinct faces in positions of responsibility. This would be a good book to use in classroom discussion of family relationships.

For 2nd and 3rd grade reaching levels. Available in paperback.

Father Is Big
Edward Radlauer
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

First Book of American Negroes
Margaret B. Young
Watts, 1966

In this book, the author attempts to give a survey of American Negro History and some of the contributions of Blacks to America. She also discusses the problems of housing, education and employment for Black Americans.

The book has some good features. It attempts a realistic and truthful approach to some parts of the story of the Black experience in America. For example, she explains the real reasons why Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation when he did, the fact that Blacks still do not have full citizenship in this country in spite of the amendments that were passed, and the immigration of many southern Blacks to northern cities where schools, jobs, and housing still are not open for Blacks, even though there are many examples of "token" integration there.

There are also many regrettably poor features in the book which should limit the use of the book in the classroom. Some overall criticisms are that the pictures many times are inappropriate and are not directly related to the text. In fact, they are usually meaningless. The author confuses the reader by mixing the past with the present and not following a logical or chronological order in her presentation.

More specific criticisms include the following:

1) Too often she uses white people as examples to show highlights of the Black man's struggle for his rights, even implying that all the abolitionists were white.

2) Unsupported generalizations are made such as the one about the "great effect" the 1954 Supreme Court decision has had on educational opportunities for Black children. Not only does she not back up this statement with facts, but later admits that by 1966 only 7% of the Black children in the eleven southern states were attending integrated schools.

In general the author, in attempting to simplify a complex subject for children, has only succeeded in producing a book containing a historical analysis that is sometimes inaccurate as well as too brief with many of her own interpretations of history which are questionable.

We are hesitant about recommending this book except that it appears to be the only broad historical survey which is designed for the young reader. Careful examination of this book should be made by the teacher before placing it in the hands of students or using it as a resource book for younger children.

Families Live Together
Elizabeth Bagwell and Esther Meeks
Follett, 1969

This book is part of the Family Life Education Series. Large color photographs with accomanying text show how urban families interact among themselves and with other families. The photographs include Blacks and whites but are confined to middle-class families. Since this presents a narrow view of urban America, some teachers might want to be aware of this quality.

For all elementary grades.

Five Cent Five Cent
Edna Walker Chandler
Albert Whitman, 1967

In this story Kolu, a little Liberian girl, gets the baby sister she has been hoping for and earns money to buy her new sister a "kwee" or American style dress.

The story is a good one and is told in a way that will introduce American children to many aspects of Liberian culture. The author treats the Liberian life style with respect, however his handling of the word "kwee" is confusing and detracts from the merits of the story. In the beginning "kwee" seems to mean simply "American style." Later the author defines it as "civilized." While it is understandable that a child would be intrigued with a different style of dress, the "civilized" definition leaves the impression that American clothes are better than African clothes rather than being merely different.

Five Friends at School
Hortense Jones and Peter Buckley
Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966

This is a Holt Urban Social Studies Book showing a kindergarten or first grade class engaged in many school activities such as music, a field trip, lunch, library work and various other projects. The pictures are excellent photographs showing Black, white, Puerto Rican children and adults working and playing together.

For grades 1-3.

Four Leaf Clover
Will Lipkind and Nicolas Mordvinoff
Harcourt Brace & World, 1959

This is an adventury story for young children about two boys who hunt for a four leaf clover. They get chased by a bull and a goat and get bucked by a horse.

We suppose that one of the boys, Mark, is meant to be Black, but the illustrator does not make this clear. Mark has a slightly darker face than Peter, but nothing intriguing. At times, he appears green, then red and finally gray.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Follow the Sunset
Herman and Nina Schneider
Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1952

In this book the author attempts to show the similarities of family activities at sunset around the world. It gives an inadequate picture of Africa, though it is not as negligent with other non-western cultures.

Many of the drawings of people are indistinct as to skin color and no Black people are included in the scenes on North America. The pictures and text that refer to African homes describe only the most primitive type of living there.

A teacher should be aware of the book's shortcomings so that she can use it judiciously, making sure that other less biased books on Africa are available for her children. K-2.

Frederick Douglass: Freedom Fighter
Lillie G. Patterson
Garrard, 1965

The life story of this great man reads like a mystery, considering the intrigue necessary for his escape, first from the slave masters and secondly, from slave hunters. Children should be fasinated by it.

The outstanding quality of this paperback is the way in which social complexities have been transformed into dramatic yet simple language for children. She does this without sacrificing quality or factual data. Some ideas that many people find difficult to explain to children she does with ease. She provides an excellent explanation of why slavery existed, of Douglass' personal

frustrations, of the government's sanction of slavery, and of the harassment that Douglass endured in the North. As a boy he was moved from plantation to plantation. This biography shows how he questioned and resisted slavery, beginning with a fist-fight with his master; it dramatizes his underground escape and finally details his tireless work as a statesman championing the rights of Blacks, the Chinese, the Irish and women.

Two of the illustrations depict slavery more festive than it really was (p. 11 and p. 19, Dell edition) thus betraying the anguish of slavery. Otherwise the drawings are satisfactory, though at times it is difficult to tell who is Black and who is white.

An excellent biography RECOMMENDED for grades 1-3.

Freddie Found a Frog
Alice V. Napjus
Van Nostrand-Reinhold, 1969

This is a simple story about a small Black boy who finds a frog in a mud puddle and tries to find what to do with it. After receiving some unsettling answers from his neighbors, the boy turns to his mother who offers her rock garden as a home for the frog.

There is not much substance to this story and the illustrations tend to romanticize the boy's crowded inner city neighborhood but the story is pleasant and attractively illustrated.

K-2.

Friends Around the World
Helen Doss
Abingdon Press, 1959

This is a pleasant but somewhat dull little book depicting the life styles of children of different lands. It is religious in tone.

Pre-school - first grade.

Fun for Chris
Blossom E. Randall
Whitman, 1956

Basically, the story centers around the friendship of two small boys who discover each other on the sidewalk in their neighborhood.

In terms of what the author was trying to achieve, the book has several inconsistencies and omissions.

The character of Chris, the white child, is fully drawn and his mother and grandmother are pictured and fully described. Toby, the Black boy, on the other hand, seems to appear from nowhere, apparently as a convenient playmate for Chris. Toby does not have any character. At a later juncture in the story, Chris becomes curious about Toby's skin color. Chris' mother explains that skin color depends on what one inherits from his parents. Nevertheless, Toby's parents and grandparents are never shown. Secondly, given the prevalence of multi-ethnic adoptions, that kind of explanation does not hold true today.

The foreward states that "young" children are usually unaware of skin differences until these are pointed out to them. The story contradicts this since its plot is predicated upon the fact that a small boy makes a natural, unprovoked inquiry about his friend's skin color.

The author doggedly insists that Toby is "not really black; he's brown." This seems to imply that black is not an acceptable description for dark skins. White people are not precisely white, but the book fails to make this point.

According to this story, white is the "normal" color of skin and black or brown the deviation which has to be explained! This point of view seems to make blackness the problem rather than zeroing in on the real problem--the attitudes of whites toward those who are black.

There are other books available, much better than this one, for teaching young children about differences in skin color.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Furry Boy
Marian Crume
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

Gabriella and Selena
Peter Desbarats
Harcourt, Brace, Inc., 1968

Two little girls decide that they are tired of being themselves. They trade places with each other at their respective homes. Their adventure ends when their parents play a joke on each of them.

The drawings of the girls and their families, one Black and one white, are delightful. The author describes the skin and features of both girls so that the text as well as the pictures provide a key to who they are. This is noticeable because dark-skinned people are rarely described in juvenile books.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 2 and 3.

Galumph
Brenda Lansdown
Houghton, Mifflin, 1963

A beautiful golden brown cat turns out to "belong" to four different owners. Children should enjoy this cat's "four lives" and how its ownership is resolved in the end.

One of the four "owners" is Tony, a Black boy. The drawings of Tony, however, make it hard to tell his skin color until the reader is well into the book.

RECOMMENDED as good children's fiction.

George Washington Carver
Sam and Beryl Epstein
Garrard, 1960

Interesting and authentic, this biography of a famous scientist details the hardships and achievements of his work in chemical and food sciences which remains unsurpassed.

The authors stress the fact that Carver's success was due mainly to his own hard work and his particular talents. Several incidents show how white racism made it difficult for him to get the education he wanted. The story describes how he got help from Black and white friends.

The illustrations are not consistent, possibly confusing the reader as to the true color tone of Carver's skin.

At one point the authors try to explain away slavery, which Carver experienced as a boy, as "the only way to get farm help in Missouri in those days." Even in a novel or a biography, slavery should not be so justified.

Despite its faults, this book is recommended to help young children understand one Black man's successful struggle against the odds of poverty and white racism and his tremendous contributions to ecology and the judicious use of natural resources. Written for advanced primary and early intermediate readers.

God Wash the World and Start Again
Lorenz Graham
Crowell, 1946

This story of Noah who built the ark is one of several biblical tales by this author which are told in the beautiful, lilting English of the Liberian African. Although the illustrations are not as powerful as those in A Road Down In the Sea, the tale should capture the interest of young readers. K-3.

Goggles
Ezra Jack Keats
Macmillan Co., 1969

A beautifully illustrated story about the adventures of two black youngsters, Peter and Archie, in an urban setting. Children will enjoy the ingenious antics of these boys whose knowledge of city streets and vacant lots helps them outsmart a band of older boys.

An excellent story RECOMMENDED for pre-school through 2nd grade. Available in paperback.

Gordon Parks
Midge Turk
Crowell, 1971

The intriguing life of a distinguished artist-photographer-poet-musician is condensed into an excellent biography for young readers. It begins with his boyhood that involves fishing and hunting as well as the death of his mother and his life thereafter as an orphan. Much of the discrimination that Mr. Parks has suffered as a Black man is recounted. It emphasizes that his initial fame as a photographer came from the sensitive use of his camera in Harlem.

Most children will enjoy this absorbing story, simplified for young readers and conveying in a dramatic way the successes and disappointments of a contemporary personality of international fame.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 2 and 3.

Grandmother Dear
Celentha Finfer, Esther Wasserberg and Florence Weinberg
Follett, 1966

This small book focuses on a grandmother and granddaughter who enjoy a day of walking, swinging, and sliding in the park. Some Black children appear in the outdoor scenes. Its main feature is its controlled vocabulary approach which relies on the "Dick and Jane" style of repetition. The book is illustrated.

For pre-school through grade 1.

Gypsy Girl's Best Shoes
Anne Rockwell
Parent's Magazine Press, 1966

A simple tale of the adventures of a little "gypsy girl" who moves to the city, finds a new pair of red shoes and eventually makes friends with some children who delight in her dancing. The illustrations reflect the multi-ethnic nature of city life. However, most of the people in positions of responsibility have white faces, e.g. the baker, florist, cashier, ice cream man, butcher, teacher, etc.

RECOMMENDED for K-3.

The Halloween Kangaroo
Mary and Richard Lewis
Ives,Washburn, 1964

Jeffrey, the main character and a Black child, wears a kangeroo suit to school on Halloween. It takes nearly the whole school day before anybody is able to unfasten his costume.

We liked the drawings; they are action-filled and vibrant. The illustrator seemed reluctant to picture Jeffrey as a genuinely dark-skinned child. As in many other books his classroom is all white, including the teacher. This seems somewhat unreal--at least we would like to believe otherwise.

This is a reader, but not terribly exciting, although it might appeal to the child who likes the unusual and the teacher who needs a holiday story as the title suggests. Grades 2-3.

Harriet and the Promised Land
Jacob Lawrence
Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1968

A dramatic and powerful picture story of Harriet Tubman's life as a slave and her heroic efforts to help her people escape to freedom.

We have special reservations about the pictures in this book. There is a stark, grim and grotesque quality about the boldly colored illustrations, apparently intended to convey the dehumanizing aspects of slavery. However, the art work proves to be too frightening for children because of its sophistication and complexity.

We recognize that Mr. Lawrence, a Black American, is a distinguished contemporary artist, known for his indisputable excellence. It is not the quality of his work that we question but its effect on children, especially since this book is written for kindergarten through grade two children. High school students and adults would appreciate the art work.

NOT RECOMMENDED for the young child.

Haunted By a Paintbrush
Al Price
Children's Press, 1968

The autobiography of a famous Black artist and illustrator, written for young children. In this factual account of his life Al Price explains share-cropping and its resulting poverty, his visit to a psychiatrist after many seeming "failures" in his life, and how drawing became increasingly important in his life.

Most of the illustrations in the book, except for the cover, do not portray Mr. Price as a Black person. There are only a few places where he refers to problems he had as a Black man.

RECOMMENDED to enlarge the vision of children to see the accomplishments of Black Americans as well as whites. Grades 3-4.

Hello,Henry
Ilse Margret Vogel
Parent's Magazine Press, 1965

Two little boys, both named Henry, get separated from their mothers in a large supermarket. They enjoy some imaginative play together before they decide to have the manager help them find their mothers.

One Henry is a white boy; one Henry Black. Young children will enjoy the make-believe bear the two boys "see" in the supermarket. It is also a good book to read aloud to young children. Grades K-3.

Henry-Fisherman
Marcia Brown
Scribner's & Sons, 1949

The setting of this story is the Virgin Islands where a dream for young Henry comes true: he gets to take a fishing trip on his father's boat. All the characters are dark-skinned, except the merchant. An added feature for ecology-minded readers is that pictures and words give vivid descriptions about the natural landscape of the Island. Grades 1-3.

Here Comes the Strikeout
Leonard Kessler
Harper & Row, 1965

A white boy who isn't good at baseball is advised by his friend, Willie, a Black youngster who helps him overcome his batting handicap. This is an easy reader with selected vocabulary.

RECOMMENDED for grades 1 through 3.

Hi Cat!
Ezra Jack Keats
Macmillan Co., 1970

One of the newest in the delightful set of Keats' books. Archie and Peter attempt to do impromptu theatre on the sidewalk but an impending battle between a cat and Willie, Peter's dog, spoils their plans. An intriguing story, as most of the Keats' books are, with lucious impressionistic illustrations.

RECOMMENDED for pre-school through grade 2.

Homes Around the World
Kathryn Jackson
Silver-Burdette, 1957

Good photographs and simple text point out similarities and differences of homes around the world. The author tries to develop the concept that each home is best for the family who lives in it.

Many different types of African homes are shown. Only a few of the people in the American section are Black. This book could be helpful in developing an understanding of those who live in a manner different from Americans or as a resource book for the teacher to use with non-readers. K-4.

The Homework Caper
Joan Lexau
Harper & Row, 1966

Ken a Black youngster, and Bill, his white friend, work together to unravel the mystery of what happened to Bill's homework assignment for school. Cartoon-like illustrations accompany this story which is somewhat confusing though perhaps entertaining for children.

RECOMMENDED for K-3.

Hooray for Jasper
Betty Horvath
Watts, 1966

Jasper, unhappy to be the smallest in the family, discovers how he can "grow larger" by doing something special for someone else. Most of the people in the story are Black but group scenes combine Black and white people.

Relevant for all "youngest" in the family who long to be recognized as important members of society, even though small! For grades 2-3.

How Do I Feel?
Norma Simon
Whitman, 1970

This story focuses upon the range of feelings which twin brothers, Mike and Eddie, experience as they go about their daily activities. Black characters are peripheral to the story, shown in the illustrations as the white boys' playmates and teacher. However, they are attractively drawn and apparently significant people in the boys' lives.

Appropriate for pre-school through 3rd grade.

How Many Kids Are Hiding on My Block?
Jean Merill and F. Scott
Merrill, 1970

A game of hide and seek played by ten or eleven children is the subject of this book. In the game the last one to be found gets a free ice cream cone from the father of the children.

The urban setting is authentic as it shows where and how children play who live in a crowded city area. Usually this is not as glorious as suburban playgrounds and parks. The illustrations are excellent and successfully convey to readers the author's message of true integration of people living and playing together. The children and the adults pictures include Blacks and whites. Puerto Ricans and Orientals--all shown in various jobs and activities, with no one group selected for the authority roles. This diversity is contrary to what is prevalent in many other books.

Suitable for grades 2-3.

Hush,Jon!
Joan Gill
Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1968

A realistic story of a city boy, living in an apartment, where he has to be quiet because of a new baby sister. His various solutions to this problem should appeal to all children, especially those who have had to adjust to a baby.

Jon is Black and his best friend is a white boy; both Black and white people appear in the excellent illustrations. This book is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, especially for showing family life in an urban setting. Grades 1-3.

I Should Have Stayed in Bed!
Joan M. Lexau
Harper & Row, 1965

Everything goes wrong for Sam from the moment he gets up. Sam solves his problem by coming home for lunch and starting the day over again. Cartoon

illustrations add to this story about a Black youngster whose misadventures any child can identify with.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

I Wonder Why
Shirley Burden
Doubleday, 1963

This small book of photographs shows a young Black girl surrounded by and admiring beautiful things. The girl asks why, when all people like beautiful things, some people do not like her.

The photographs in this book are beautiful yet in her choice of subjects the author, perhaps unconsciously, has answered her own question. The objects and symbols here presented are overwhelmingly white--the pure white snow, the white angel, the bride dressed all in white, the tiny white hand of a baby. These are powerful symbols that convey the message that "white is right." There are other photographs but none relates directly to the Black child--nothing that counters the ascendancy of white over black in our symbolic value system.

In the hands of a perceptive teacher, this book could be effective in stimulating a discussion about the symbolism of color but there is no guarantee that such a teacher will always be present when a library book is read. Further, this book can cause anguish to a Black child and we question whether a book that could have detrimental effects on a Black child can be a proper teaching tool for white children. Although the book has been converted into a film, the use of this media does not relieve its faults.

NOT RECOMMENDED

I Write It
Ruth Krauss
Harper & Row, 1970

It is a child's name and all kinds of children write it on all kinds of real and imaginary places--the sidewalk, the air, the ocean waves. Many nationalities and many environments are shown in this small picture book for very young readers. K-2.

In Henry's Backyard
Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish
Schuman, 1948

Cartoon characters from around the world help "Henry USA" to analyze his prejudices. Excellent story that refutes myths about "different" people by using science and a good deal of humor. Written by a famous anthropologist, its facts are accurate, persuasive and simply presented.

Adults using this book should note that the false, but widely accepted, concept of three races is given credibility because most of the illustrations show striking black, yellow and white faces. Fortunately, no mention of race occurs within the text. We hope that the bold colors will not be used to explain people in terms of "races." Near the end of the book more true to life coloring appears, like browns, beiges and salmon.

RECOMMENDED from pre-kindergarten through 4th grade.

In the Park: An Excursion in Four Languages (1968)
In School: Learning in Four Languages (1969)
Esther Hautzig
Macmillan

This books intend to show children how common experiences are enjoyed in school or in the park by people in various parts of the world. New York, Paris, Moscow and Madrid--these are the parks or school situations covered on each page and key words are illustrated simultaneously in English, French, Russian and Spanish. The inclusion of Blacks in In the Park is meaningful whereas with In School, it is negligible and token.

Overall, the books seem helpful by introducing children to languages other than their own, especially Russian which most American children do not get a chance to hear and see. The drawings are colorful and appealing.

RECOMMENDED for K-2.

It's Nice To Be Little
John Stanley
Rand McNally & Co., 1965

An enjoyable book that assures children they will soon be big, but meanwhile, it gives the advantages of being little and able to play most of the time. The illustrations show children of different ethnic groups, though the Black child and Oriental child are peripheral characters in the illustrations. Moreover, they are never shown in an intimate relationship with white children.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

J. T.
Jane Wagner
Van Nostrand-Reinhold, 1969

In this story a young Black boy living in Harlem befriends a starving one-eyed cat. In caring for the cat and later in trying to deal with his grief when the cat is killed the boy learns a great deal about himself and the world.

In this book the text and the photographs by Gordon Parks, Jr., combine to produce a beautifully moving work that will stay with the child--or adult--long after he had put the book down. The story is unusual in that it maintains authenticity while providing insight. The characters are real people with real shortcomings but also a generous amount of compassion--characters that are human in the highest sense.

This book should be in every library. All grades.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

Jasper Makes Music
Betty Horvath
Franklin Watts, Inc. 1967

This is a story of Jasper, a Black child, longing for an expensive guitar which he isn't able to convince his parents that he really needs. His grandpa gives him a "magic shovel" and encourages him to believe that

his dream will come true with a little bit of work. Jasper uses the shovel to earn money by doing odd jobs. All children should enjoy this very touching story.

RECOMMENDED for grades 1 - 3.

Jennie's Hat
Ezra Jack Keats
Harper & Row, 1966

This is a simple wish fulfillment story focusing on a small girl and her newly acquired hat. A thin story line depends on illustrations for sustaining interest. As is usual with Keats' books, his pictures are attractive and the book is nicely integrated.

RECOMMENDED for grades K - 2.

John Henry, An American Legend
Ezra Jack Keats
Viking, 1965

The legend of John Henry, a Black man, is retold in a dramatic way. The book is colorfully illustrated with bold pictures. His work on the railroad, herioc and daring, appeals to young boys.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-school through grade 4.

Josefina February
Evaline Ness
Scribner, 1963

A story about a little Haitian girl faced with the difficult decision of whether to give up a little burro she has found and grown to love in order to purchase some shoes for her grandfather's birthday. The story has universal appeal for children in that it presents a common theme of self-sacrifice. The warmly colored woodblock prints add a delightful quality to the story.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

Just Like You
Lenore Klein
Harvey House, 1968

This picture book attempts to point out the physical differences in the living world, first with animals then with people. Apparently, its intent is to show that although people differ, they are basically alike. We found it to be a boring book, but our greater misgiving is that it seems to be useless in clarifying children's thinking on differences. Although colorful, the illustrations seem to be too many and too fussy.

The idea of variety within life is introduced by an elaborate description of various kinds of fish, animals and birds. The section on people differences is skimpy and, in contrast, seems to make for an unbalanced presentation. The author seems to have started with a theme, but failed to follow through on its most important aspect.

The other faults emerge from the illustrations and the implicit messages conveyed. In one instance, a lone Black child is shown at the bottom of the page holding a white doll, completely surrounded by whites who tower over her like giants in a forest. In another illustration, the white faces have distinct facial features, while the red and black characters remain faceless. When people are shown engaged in various occupations, Blacks are not shown. Needless to say this is mere token integration. Yet there is a larger issue at stake. Because of the omission of non-whites and the dominance of white profiles, the illustrations simply cannot convey the equality of people. The patronizing attitude implicit in this selectivity hardly needs elaborating.

It is baffling that the book does not mention that people differ in skin color, as this physical difference would seem to be one of the high points of this kind of book. Instead, the concluding lines say that

> Bugs are bugs and birds are birds, people are people, too! Just like you! And you! And you!

At the very least, the dark-skinned child would have to make some adjustment to identify with such a grandiose ideal obviously unfulfilled in this book.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Kick, Pass and Run
Leonard Kessler
Harper and Row, 1966

An easy-to-read book which introduces some of the fundamentals of football through the silly antics of a collection of familiar animals. The animals discover what the game is about by watching two teams composed of both Black and white youngsters. K-3.

Kwaku - A Boy Of Ghana
G. Warren Schloat, Jr.
Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1962

This is a story about the people of Ghana and their way of life. Many pictures show the Ghanian people at work and at play.

RECOMMENDED for grades 3 through 5.

Let Me See You Try
Marian Crume
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

A Letter To Amy
Ezra Jack Keats
Harper and Row, 1968

This is another story of Peter, a Black hero in some of E. J. Keats' books. Peter chases a birthday invitation to Amy to the corner mailbox through a colorful mirage of backgrounds drawn by the author. The only drawback to this book is the same as in other Peter series: the drawing of Peter's mother is almost grotesque. It seems that she could be slimmer in order to avoid the "mammy" stereotype so frequently attached to Black women. This picture story with simple words could capture the interest and attention of any first grade reader. K - 2.

Let's Catch a Monster
Ann Herbert Scott
Lothrop, 1967

This is a story about a Black family at Halloween time. Linda, Cookie, Martin, and Julia set out on Halloween night in hopes that they will be able to catch a monster. They "capture" a "monster" in a bag only to find that it is really a cat. All children will enjoy this one.

RECOMMENDED for grade 3.

Let's Find Out About Milk
David C. Whitney
Franklin Watts 1967

As one of the "Let's Find Out" beginning science series, this book shows the stages necessary to the production of milk from the cow to the table with a clear and easy yet thorough description of the various steps it goes through. The illustrations, which are designed to aid the explanation, show Black and white children, mothers and workmen.

Lift Every Voice and Sing
James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamund
Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1970

In this book, the national anthem of Black Americans, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" is presented in story form. Both words and music are given. Illustrations in pen and ink drawing are well done and portray the ideas of the song. Some illustrations may require explanation and interpretation by the teacher to help children understand parts of the Afro-American culture.

This book can be used at all grade levels, K - 6.

Listen
Marian Crume
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

Little Boy Who Lives Up High
John and Lucy Hawkinson
Albert Whitman, 1967

This is a simple story about a Black child who lives in a high rise apartment. Cars, buildings and grownups seem little from his window but suddenly become larger than he is when he goes downstairs.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

Little Brown Baby
Paul Lawrence Dunbar
Dodd, Mead & Co., 1966

A collection of poems which have a special appeal for children, written by a great poet. Many of the poems are written in the language pattern of Black people emerging from slavery. The poems, which capture the mood and emotions of oppressed people anticipating a better tomorrow, might have significance for young readers if they are presented in historical context as part of a Black history course or unit.

Unfortunately, the poems are introduced with a biographical sketch of the author which exudes a warm glowy feeling about slavery and the hard time of Black people, e.g. there is a reference to "faithful old slaves" and "...a little colored girl leaning forward eagerly..." at her master's feet.

The laudatory statement by W. D. Howell is particularly condescending and demeaning in its implication that racial difference are genetic rather than cultural and/or experiential:

> ...it appears to me that there is a precious difference of temperment between the races... suggested by Mr. Dunbar in those pieces....where he studies the moods and traits of his race in its own accent of <u>our</u> English. [underlining added]
>
> He reveals in these a finely ironical perception of the Negro's limitation....
>
> ...these are the divinations and reports of what passes in the hearts and minds of a lowly people...

such a blatant display of racial superiority will provide the sensitive teacher with an excellent opportunity to help young children understand the tremendous barrier which racist beliefs and attitudes present to the achievement of equality for Black people

The Little Brown Hen
Patricia Miles Martin
Crowell Co., 1960

Willie's little brown hen disappears but is eventually found with several baby ducks she has hatched, just in time for Willie to present his mother with some ducks for her birthday. An attractively illustrated story of a farm boy in rural Kansas in which all of the characters are Black. Mr. Mudge is the only character who appears stereotyped as a lazy, rural Black man, "living off the fat of the land."

Generally an appealing story RECOMMENDED for grades 1-4.

The Little Drummer Boy
Ezra Jack Keats
Macmillan Co., 1968

The well known Christmas song is here illustrated in Keats' inimitable style. Each page is truly a work of art. The drummer boy and the baby Jesus are shown with dark skins--a refreshing change from the usual lilly white Christmas fare. Pre-school through grade 2.

A Little Happy Music
Robert Winsor
Hawthorn , 1969

This reader focuses on a Black family and the joy which an old abandoned piano brings to their apartment house, especially for the children. A warm family life is portrayed and the scenes of the story change fairly rapidly to make for interesting reading. Our reservation does not concern the content of the story so much as it does the illustrations.

The people seem coarse and comic-like, as if they were being manipulated rather than acting as real people. They seem to be drawn more as stereotypes of Black people than as individuals. They are entirely stiff figures, especially when they are portrayed dancing. This particular scene makes a mockery of the creative style and movement inherent in the dance of Black culture.

We also noticed that the doll belonging to the Black child is white. Children, of course, should and can have dolls different from themselves. However, in this setting which is otherwise Black, it can take on a symbolic value, subtle but effective.

Children might be impressed with the dynamics of this story. However, teachers and parents who wish to consider it should be aware of its illustrations and the tendency towards stereotyping.

For grades 2-4.

The Lollipop Party
Ruth A. Sonneborn
Viking Press, 1967

Thomas' first experience with being left alone ends happily when his mother, delayed unexpectedly on a subway train, returns from work. Meanwhile Thomas entertains his nursery school teacher with lollipops and small talk. The illustrations alone offer a subtle statement that the family is Black and the teacher is white. A warm and appealing story which any child who has had to struggle with fear and lonliness should enjoy.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

Lonely Maria
Elizabeth Coatsworth
Pantheon, 1960

A poignant story about a West Indian girl living on a lonely island where there are no other children. Through her own ingenuity she creates imaginary companions out of the sand who help her overcome her lonliness.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

Look At Your Eyes
Paul Showers
Crowell, 1962

The author describes the function of the various parts of the eye through the eyes of a Black youngster who looks at himself and passersby while waiting for his mother. Well written in prose and rhyme and attractively illustrated.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 3rd grade.

The Lost Smile
Judy Gail Ainsworth
Hale and Co., 1971

As a young white boy awakens with a gloomy face, his mother encourages him to look for a smile. His adventures are related largely through beautiful photographs of people encountered on his smile safari during the rest of the day. He makes friends with a couple of Black children sitting alone in the schoolyard and discovers how to smile again. The children are unnamed and the environment is diverse -- both of which give this story a universal appeal.

RECOMMENDED for pre-school through grade 2.

Malcolm X
Arnold Adoff
Crowell, 1970

The book includes accurate information about Malcolm's early life, his experiences as a young "hustler" in Harlem and his life in jail and the changes in him that began there. All through the biography his distrust of white people is made clear and the reasons for this feeling. Most important of all, the book helps young readers understand why Malcolm X was a great leader for a wide variety of people and how he taught Blacks to be proud of themselves and their ancestry.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 2 - 5.

Mary Jo's Grandmother
Janice May Udry
Whitman, 1970

Mary Jo's family visits her grandmother's farm and for the first time, Mary Jo is allowed to stay on alone with her grandmother. When her grandmother falls and injures herself, Mary Jo must determine the best way to help.

This story not only has the universal appeal of Mary Jo's predicament, but also offers a nostalgic picture of "grandmother's house in the country." It is well told and has large appealing illustrations.

We look forward to more of Mary Jo's adventures. For grades 1-2.

Me
Beth Clure and Helen Rumsey
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

Meet Abraham Lincoln
Barbara Cary
Random House, 1965

This is a reader for advanced primary students about the life of Abraham Lincoln. It presents him as a super hero and conveys a number of distortions about slavery and the Civil War issues.

Slavery is presented as a simple economic necessity with no attempt to examine its inhumane and immoral aspects. The relationship between the North and South and their respective positions on slavery is over-simplified and misrepresented, e.g. "...the people in the North did not own slaves...did not want them...." In fact, there were slaves in the North, and many Northerners were deeply implicated in maintaining slavery and other forms of racial injustices.

Lincoln's refusal to support equal rights for Negroes in Illinois and his ambivalent position on slavery until the end of the war is ignored. Finally, the text does not include any illustrations of Black people; nor does it refer to the role of the free Black people in the North, abolitionists, slave revolts, or Black Union soldiers in ultimately forcing Lincoln to take a stand against slavery.

In summary this story does a great disservice to Black Americans and underestimates the ability of young children to face complex and often painful questions about the history of our people.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Mississippi Possum
Miska Miles
Little, Brown & Co., 1965

A starkly illustrated story about the escapades of a possum who finds comfort with a Black family as both seek refuge from the flooding waters of the Mississippi.

The possum, who is the central character, is well developed in the illustrations and the story while the members of the family remain in the background--obscure, bland and emotionless though confronted with possible disaster.

The author's technique of presenting a family struggling for survival in a secondary role to a possum's adventures is disturbing. One sense the author knows and cares more for possums than people. Yet, children will enjoy the possum's adventures.

RECOMMENDED K-3.

Meet Martin Luther King
James D. McKay
Random House, 1969

This is a beautiful book, surpassing most other King biographies and remarkable in its ability to clarify complex events for children.

Above all, Mr. McKay is honest and accurate so that children will understand the magnitude of Dr. King's work and the injustices Blacks have been subjected to. He deals with angry feelings of Black men as well as hostile feelings too often evident in the white community.

Simply and accurately he explains the meaning of the Supreme Court, Jim Crow laws, "nigger," urban riots, boycotts, the Nobel Peace Prize and several other institutions. Such events are relevant to Dr. King's life to understand why he was great, but they are beyond the experience of most young children to whom this book is directed.

Classrooms and home life would be enriched by having this book on hand. It would be an excellent core text for a unit on the community, the legal system of the Black experience. Though it is not a picture book, some meaningful photographs and some original drawings by Ted Burwell are well chosen.

Young children should enjoy having it read aloud. It is sufficiently simplified for the third grade reader and above to handle alone.

Monsieur Jolicoeur's Umbrella
Anico Surany
Putnam Sons, 1967

This is an unconventional and disturbing story set in Haiti about the antics of two sisters and their encounter with the new schoolmaster, Monsieur Jolicoeur.

The author implicitly sanctions brutal treatment of children and authoritarian teaching by leaving the situation with the schoolmaster in command. One is saddened by the way the children are subdued and disturbed by the conclusion that education will continue as usual with Monsieur Jolicoeur intimidating the children with the threat of his umbrella.

As a story about school life, this book is disastrous. It implies that tensions between teachers and children cannot be resolved except by brute force. While this may be an accurate representation of education Haitian style, and painfully real for some Black children in American schools, we believe the author's implicit sanctioning of the oppression of children is irresponsible.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

The Moon Pony
Charlotte Pomerantz
Young Scott Books, 1967

A young Black boy lies restlessly in his crowded city apartment listening to his baby sister cry. Hearing his mother's soothing voice,he drifts into sleep and dreams of riding a pony on the moon. When he wakes, his sister is still crying but he puts her to sleep by telling her his dream.

Although the story has a universal theme, it is unusual in the way reality and fantasy are mixed. The poetic quality of the story is enhanced by the sensitive and very beautiful illustrations.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

My Dog Is Lost
Ezra Jack Keats and Pat Cherr
Crowell, 1960

Juanito has just moved toNew York City from Puerto Rico and speaks no English. On top of that his dog is missing. Traveling to various parts of the city in search of the dog, he meets children of different ethnic groups. By ingenious use of sign language Juanito is able to tell them his problem and describe his dog. Together the children locate the dog and take him home. This is a lively story with a light humorous tone that is effective in presenting the brotherhood theme. Young readers are also given the opportunity to learn several Spanish words.

RECOMMENDED for K-3.

My Dog Rinty
Ellen Tarry and Marie Hall
Viking Press, 1946

Excellent photographs accompany this story about the adventures of David and his dog, Rinty, who is continually in trouble until his special talent for catching mice brings him fame in Harlem.

Though the story was written in 1946 and the dress styles are somewhat outdated, it has universal appeal for all children. One of the earliest books in which all of the characters are Black.

RECOMMENDED for grades 2-6.

Naja the Snake and Mangus the Mongoose
Oliver Kirkpatrick
Doubleday, 1970

A Jamaican folktale about a lasting friendship which develops between two arch enemies--a mongoose and a snake. Jamaicans are shown in peripheral roles in the story which centers around the adventures of these two animals.

K-3.

Ned and Ted
Florine Robinson
Exposition Press, 1967

This is a story similar to Ed and Ted. It has slightly more action but has the same shortcomings (see review). In this book the illustrations are not even grey, although one of the boys and their parents appear white in the illustrations.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Negro Art, Music and Rhyme For Young Folks
Helen Adele Whiting
Associated Publishers, 1967

This pamphlet-like book intends to help the primary child develop some appreciation of art forms. If it had been written more thoughtfully, it would be a suitable source book for reading in grades 2-5.

Most of the book is devoted to African people and their creative skills in ironcasting, wood and clay sculpture, clothmaking, tanning and music. A smaller portion describes the work songs instituted by Blacks during slavery.

Although its subject matter is useful for children, the book has some deficiencies which should be seriously considered.

Overall, it is not an imaginative book. That fault begins with its repetitous sentence structure that becomes quickly boring, even for the junior reader. Example: "The African likes to make bowls from clay. The African likes to make jars from clay. The African likes to make pots from clay....He keeps food in the jars. He cooks in the pots. He eats from the bowls." Moreover, this chant enable children and adults to form stereotypes so that one thinks all people in Africa like to do the same things.

The Afro-American music section is all too brief and more negligent in what it omits than in what it includes. The explanation and examples are largely confined to slave work songs, but even these do not include those used as signals for slaves to escape. Secondly, by excluding blues, jazz and spirituals, this discussion gives an

incomplete survey of music forms indigenous to Black Americans. In screening out her selections of music, it is most difficult to understand why the author passed over these sophisticated idioms. Given its skimpy presentation, this section is misleading and shouldn't have been included unless given better treatment.

Certain incongruities are troubling especially since the book has a copyright as recent as 1967. For example, the brief chapters dealing with music are written in the present tense and leave a distinct impression that "Cotton Needs Picking" is a tune sung by Afro-Americans in contemporary occupations.

Some of the illustrations of people seem grotesque. However, the style and arrangement of the African art objects are impressive.

In trying to simplify these achievements for children, the author has made the Black aesthetic seem paltry. We do NOT RECOMMEND Negro Art, Music and Rhyme because of its omissions and fallacies. Fortunately, much better books are available.

New Boy In School
May Justus
Hastings House, 1963

This is a story about the experiences of Lennie, who moves to a community where he is the only Black child in his class within a newly integrated school.

Lennie is portrayed as a fearful, unhappy, almost paranoid child who anticipates rejection because of his skin color. He tries his best to avoid contact with the white children whose overtures of friendship eventually help him feel accepted.

The characterization of Lennie lacks authenticity for two reasons:

1) The author has created an artificial atmosphere of total acceptance on the part of the white characters; Lennie's fears of rejection appear unfounded and irrational.

2) Although one would expect a Black child in America to anticipate rejection by whites, particularly in a newly integrated situation, Lennie's overwhelming fears and his tearful, cringing behavior is nevertheless grossly exaggerated. Black children, like all children, have pride, dignity and diverse mechanisms which help them cope with stressful situations which the author does not afford Lennie. Undoubtedly, it would be difficult for a Black child to identify with this weak, fearful character.

The white characters seem equally contrived. They have no weaknesses; they display no prejudices or hostilities; they show no signs of discomfort in Lennie's presence. Terry's repeated deference to Lennie's feelings and interests epitomizes the white man's patronizing posture with Black people. It is a posture which precludes a natural, equal relationship and should not be offered as a model for children to emulate.

The process of integration is simplistically explained as "a situation where negro (sic)children and white children play and study together." No attempt is made to provide an honest account of why schools are segregated. Here is an implicit assumption that integration is inevitably a one-way process with Black children leaving inferior, dilapidated schools to become assimilated into educationally superior white schools. Becoming assimilated involves denying one's Black identity as we see happening to Lennie, i.e. "Lennie's skin color eventually seemed of no more importance than the color of his clothes."

The book jacket suggests that this story offers a model for how school integration should be accomplished as "...more and more schools admit Negro boys and girls." We find the model objectionable, the situation contrived and the characters unreal.

NOT RECOMMENDED

The No-Bark Dog
Stan Williamsberg

This is a story about a Black boy, Timothy, who is worried about his dog because he won't bark. Small children will enjoy this book and they will be delighted to find that Timothy's dog finally does learn to bark.

RECOMMENDED for grades 2 and 3.

No Mules
William Papas
Coward-McCann, 1968

This book is expressly written to make a comment on white prejudice. It involves a South African boy who wants to buy a flute from a white merchant. After the boy sees a "No Blacks" sign posted on the store door, he sends in his white mule. The mule, in turn, wrecks the store's furnishing, but gets the flute.

The plot of the story is distasteful.

Obviously, it is written to show the absurdity of racial separatism and apartheid. The "No Blacks" sign was eventually replaced with "No Mules"--to symbolically show the stupidity of this custom: the mule's entrance into the store implies that something more destructive or "worse-than-a-black" could disrupt a business. This was supposed to be the moral or the lesson taught to the white businessman. This kind of symbolism is too refined for a picture book and it is even intricate and confusing for adults.

Our main criticsm is that this author deals with an important social issue in a flippant way. He presents a problem situation, oversimplifies the problem of racial discrimination and finally presents a totally unacceptable solution to a deep-rooted problem. Discrimination on whatever level cannot be resolved by white mules and one should not joke with it. This represents an intolerable way to introduce children to a politically explosive situation of the magnitude of apartheid and racism.

We think this book would leave many questions in a child's mind. The author never explains the social or traditional significance of the "No Blacks" sign. It is too much to assume that a young child would know its

implications. The author sets up a political reality, but he does not comment on it nor does he allow any event in the story to explain an unnatural situation. In this instance, he has clearly abdicated his responsibility as an author who sets out to comment on a social situation.

There are other features of No Mules that add to its unacceptability. Its stereotypes. The white boss and the white merchant are drawn as healthy, cigarsmoking, strutting, confident, well-heeled whites; their role is to give orders and sell merchandise. They are given every opportunity to exploit Blacks and they indulge in this, as if it were a right. The Africans are pictures as bloat-bellied, malnourished, dumb saplings: their dress exposes part of their buttocks. The story impresses one with the strenuous work of logging which the Africans do, yet they look more weak than able-bodied. The illustrator intends to make a caricature, but the contrast between the Blacks and the whites is pretty far-fetched and will add to the naive white child's sense of the primitive, half-naked African, while boosting his own sense of superiority. The stylistic treatment of the characters makes for an unconscious importing of racism to innocent children.

In examining the story further, we find that when the African boy leaves his country home and arrives in the city, a panoramic view of the shopping center shows that all the people are white. This is an interesting commentary on how writers and illustrators accept a racist society. They know exactly when to make a scene segregated: in No Mules, the work force is all Black; the shopping center, where people are at leisure and affluent, is all white.

At the end, it appears that the African boy has contrived to get his long-awaited flute. He seems to have stolen it by causing a scene of riot proportions, then looted the store.

We don't think most teachers are equipped to handle the numerous faults of No Mules despite its being considered one of the better books in "Human Relations." Undoubtedly, Black children would be humiliated by having to read it, since the Black perspective is not considered in writing the story.

We strongly recommend that libraries and teachers refrain from making it accessible to children. Grades K - 2.

No Place To Play
Paul Newmann
Grossett & Dunlap, 1969

A simple story about three friends who can't find a place to play. Finally, they build their own clubhouse and after overcoming a few minor obstacles, they enjoy their new play area. One of the three boys is shown as Black in the illustrations. However, except for darkened skin, he appears as an exact replica of the two white boys in this middle class, suburban setting.

K-3.

Oh Lord, I Wish I Was A Buzzard
Polly Greenberg
Macmillan, 1968

A simple, colorfully illustrated tale about a little Black girl who spends a day working in the cotton fields with her father and brother. To escape the heat and arduous work, she daydreams about becoming something else--a dog, a butterfly, a buzzard.

The tale is dull, repetitious, and the characterizations bland. The economic necessity of all the family members having to work in the fields to survive is not adequately explained. As a result, the father appears to be unusually mean and strict. The characterization of a Black child trying to escape work tends to reinforce the stereotype that Blacks are lazy.

Equally, the animals she wishes to become--a snake, a buzzard, a lizard--have negative and demeaning connotations which could lead a child to conclude that this girl is an inferior person.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Old MacDonald Had An Apartment House
Judith Barrett
Atheneum, 1969

An apartment superintendent in the city, Mr. MacDonald, startles his tenants with his gardening and farming activities in the building. In the end he gets

involved in a marketing venture which pleases his disgusted boss. It is an absurd and non-sensical story drawn with some Black characters among the many tenants. The illustrations in black and white are cartoon-like, and perhaps more humorous for adults than for children.

RECOMMENDED for grades 1-3.

On The Beat: Policemen At Work
Barry Robinson and Martin J. Dain
Harcourt Brace & World, Inc. 1968

An easy-to-read text accompanies this photographic essay of a team of patrolmen in an urban setting--one white and one Black--as they go about their daily duties.

Appropriate for pre-school through 3rd grade.

One, Two, Three For Fun
Muriel Stanek
Albert Whitman, 1967

An attractively illustrated picture book which shows children of different ethnic backgrounds at play. It is intended to teach young children simple number concepts.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-school through 3rd grade.

The Other Side of the Fence
Molly Cone
Houghton-Mifflin, 1967

This is a novel type story for early readers. It concerns a Black family who moves into a neighborhood where they encounter open bigotry from some white families. The climaxing incident occurs when their next door neighbor decides to paint his side of the fence white and "the other side" black to correspond to the families. This temporarily reduces the soberness of the story and provides a bit of humor. Joey, a sensitive white child, is instrumental in persuading the white adults to change their attitudes towards the new family.

This is a rare book for children and we recommend it heartily for several reasons. Its main theme dares to deal with prejudice. Secondly, the white adults who are the source of difficulty for the Black family become self-motivated to change their behavior. In many other stories, either children or animals are utilized to resolve adult bigotry. Finally, it represents a realistic situation where emotions are not glossed over, where people deal with real issues and where the Blacks, despite having to suffer humiliation, do not take insults passively.

Appropriate for 3-5 grades.

Our Neighbors in Africa
John C. Caldwell and Elsie F. Caldwell
John Day Co., 1961

This is a book containing factual information about Africa, its more than 40 countries, and its variety of people, climates and land forms. Slavery is mentioned briefly, perhaps too briefly. Nevertheless the authors attempt to explain that African people wish to be free of European dominance.

In too many instances, however, the reader is forced to make comparisons between many parts of the African cultures and "our way of life." In these comparisons, the Africans appear as predominantly poor illiterates, lacking in things like schools (like ours), chairs and tables in their homes (like we have).

These situations described may be based on true facts, but the authors make no attempt to explain the differences in the cultural way of life of many of these people where things like tables and chairs would be entirely superfluous ! Many times one feels the authors are being rather condescending towards "our neighbors in Africa." The many important accomplishments of African peoples are hardly mentioned in the book.

Because we feel the "picture" of African presented here for children is warped and false, this book is NOT RECOMMENDED for use.

Pam and Pam
Margaret Gans
Children's Press, 1969

In this story a little Black girl and a little white girl exchange dolls, promising to return them to each other the next day. One girl becomes ill while the other waits in the park for her doll. It is not until the end of the summer that the dolls are returned to their proper owners. The story is dull and repetitive with lifeless illustrations that seem hastily and carelessly done. While the book is not harmful, it is doubtful that it would be of sustaining interest to children.

People Are Important
Eva Knox Evans
Capitol, 1960

This is a book which should be in every classroom and home. Its universal truths told simply and honestly will not become outdated. Even though the reading level would be about grade 4-6, it is an important resource book to help children understand about the similarities and the differences between people all over the world.

The author discusses differences in languages, names, food, clothing, manners and customs, and appearances. She points out that each country has its own accepted customs and ways of behaving which may seem strange to others who are not familiar with them.

The book ends with a chapter on getting along with each other through understanding and by remembering that each person is important. An exceptional book, by the author of All About Us, also HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

Peter's Chair
Ezra J. Keats
Harper and Row, 1967

A colorfully illustrated story about a little boy who is jealous of the attention his baby sister receives, though he comes to realize that she isn't really a threat to his position in the family. The story involves a Black family and their problem is one that relates to all families.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 2nd grade.

The Picture Life of Martin Luther King
Margaret B. Young
Franklin Watts, Inc., 1968

This story of the life and contributions of Martin Luther King includes non-descript photographs and a dull, plodding narrative. The author fails to offer any historical explanation for the racial inequality and segregation she presents, nor does she touch upon the violence and brutality on the part of the white community during these events, all of which help to explain the power of the non-violent philosophy and the greatness of this man. The content is historically accurate but too skimpy.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

The Picture Life of Ralph J. Bunche
Margaret B. Young
Franklin Watts, Inc., 1968

A picture story of the life and contributions of Ralph J. Bunche. The style is plodding and somewhat dull, and the issues oversimplified presumably to make the biography more readable for young children. However, it does convey to children the dignity and contributions of a great Black American.

RECOMMENDED for grades 1 through 4.

Playtime in Africa
Efua Sutherland
Atheneum, 1962

A lovely picture book which conveys the delight, curiosity, enthusiasm and exuberance of African children at play. The excellent photographs are accompanied by children's descriptions of various games and activities, many of which are universally popular. It has appeal for children and adults and is an effective antidote to the many books which paint Africa as a dark and primitive continent.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 6th grade.

Princess of the Full Moon
Frederic Guirma
Macmillan, 1970

The Princess of the Full Moon is a beautiful and selfish African girl whose ambition is to marry the richest and most handsome prince in the land.

Exotically illustrated, this African folktale is fascinating, adventurous and rich in fantasy. It could be a bit frightening to some children but definitely captivating for most K-5 children.

Pumpkinseeds
Steven A. Yezback
Bobbs-Merrill, 1969

The little boy in this story buys pumpkinseeds on a summer morning and tries to find someone in his city neighborhood to share them with. The story lacks depth but the illustrations capture the beauty and variety of Black people so well that the book is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for the illustrations alone. K-3.

Rakoto And The Drongo Bird
Robin McKown
Lothrop, 1966

This is a beautifully illustrated story of a small boy living in Madagascar at the time of the slave trade. It handles a very sensitive aspect in Black history--Black merchants turning over their fellow countrymen to the white slave traders. Children will identify with young Rakoto and hopefully be able to view slavery through the eyes of its victims. This is an exciting story that will appeal to advanced readers but could also be read aloud to young children.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, grades 1-5.

The Raven and Other Fairy Tales
Joan Balfour Payne
Hastings House, 1969

A collection of four old fairy tales whose array of characters--from princes to paupers--are all portrayed as Black. Striking, bold illustrations add to the magical quality of these tales which all children will enjoy.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 2-5.

Red Man, White Man, African Chief
Marguerite Lerner
Anti-Defamation League, 1960

This Brotherhood Award Winner focuses on skin color. The simplified, scientific explanation is clear and understandable without being patronizing to any single group. It is colorfully illustrated, though the style sometimes seems to make people unnatural.

For grades 1-4.

A Ride On High
Candida Palmer
Lippincott, 1966

This is a fast-moving interesting story about two eight- or nine-year-old Black boys who ride the El in Chicago. The boys, who are a long way from home, lose their return fare but are able to solve the problem. They are models of resourcefulness and provide positive identification for any child. The illustrations of a highly dense urban setting are natural because they are typical and realistic but not necessarily shabby. Children in grades two through five should be interested in this book.

A Road Down In The Sea
Lorenz Graham
Crowell, 1946, 1970

This story of Moses leading the Hebrew people out of Egypt is told in the beautiful, lilting English of the Liberian African. The superb illustrations add power to the narrative which African storytellers pass on in the form of spoken songs. A fascinating and informative book for all young readers. Pre-school through grade 3.

Ronnie
Eileen Rosenbaum
Parents Magazine Press, 1969

A photographic story of a small Black boy's long morning walk to the park with his father to try out his new roller skates. The story is probably too long and a little choppy but even so the unusual style conveys

the boundless energy of young boys and their vivid and unconnected thought patterns. Good photographs portray a handsome Black family and provide a realistic, non-editorialized view of urban life.

We would RECOMMEND this book for K-5.

Ronnie's Wish
Jeanette P. Brown
Friendship Press, 1954

Ronnie wishes he weren't so little. A visit to the children's zoo makes him realize that there are special pleasures which only children can enjoy. This integrated story is pleasantly told and the urban setting is appealingly illustrated; however, the mother is given a somewhat dominant role in that she appears alone in situations where one would expect to see a father as well. This dominant role reflects the matriarchal stereotype often conveyed about Black families.

Appropriate for grades 2 and 3.

The Rooftop Mystery
Joan M. Lexau
Harper and Row, 1968

Sam tries to avoid the unpleasant task of carrying his sister's doll to their new apartment. The doll mysteriously disappears from the roof top where he had left it, but with the help of his friend, Albert, the doll is tracked down and all ends well. The cartoon-like illustrations show that Sam is Black and Albert is white. Entertaining for young children K-3.

Round About the City: Stories You Can Read To Yourself
Child Study Association
Crowell, 1966

This is a collection of stories about city children and the varied experiences they have. One of the six stories involves a Black child. Overall, the stories are rather humdrum and dated.

Written for grades 1 and 2.

Round Things Everywhere
Seymour Reit
McGraw Hill, 1969

One of the My World Series for Early Childhood. A young Black boy explores his home and the neighboring city streets to see how many round shapes he can find. The simple narrative is accompanied by brilliant colored photographs which all children should enjoy. Pre-school through 3rd grade.

Sam
Ann Herbert Scott
McGraw Hill, 1967

The story of a little Black boy named Sam who has a problem common to many children. Everyone in his family is too busy to play with him and he seems to get in everyone's way until suddenly they all realize how they have hurt his feelings. The different moods of this warm story are perfectly captured by the beautiful illustrations which show a Black family in an urban setting.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for K-3.

Schoolroom Bunny
Janet Konkle
Children's Press, 1965

In this simple story, the bunny tells how he came to live in the schoolroom and how the children learned to take care of him. The story is illustrated with photographs showing Black and white children in a real school situation. K-1.

The Secret Box
Jo Anna Cole
William Morrow, 1971

This is a very moving story focusing on young Anne Marie as she grappled with the problem of stealing from her classroom. Anne Marie is warmly portrayed as a Black child living in a city housing project. Like most young girls, she has a secret box to hide her trinkets

in, including the ones she steals. The story deals with a real problem in a sympathetic manner. Since most parents and teachers must counsel with children along these lines, they will find this book helpful and appreciate its non-didactic approach. The illustrations are beautiful.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED reader for grades 1 through 3.

The Sesame Street Book of People and Things
Children's Television Workshop
Distributed in association with Time-Life Books and Little, Brown, 1970

The familiar personalities, both real and imaginary, of TV's Sesame Street come alive in this lively book that depends mostly on photographs to get its messages across. Some of the pictures deal with common occupations while others intend to help a child think about certain feelings and emotions that he might have experienced.

RECOMMENDED for pre-school through grade 1.

She Wanted To Read: The Story of Mary Macleod Bethune
Ella K. Carruth
Washington Square Press, 1969

This is a compelling biography of Mary McLeod Bethune for advanced readers. It contains a great deal of information and seems to present an accurate picture not only of this outstanding woman but of the times as well.

This book is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for individual reading and could also be useful as supplementary reading in a primary social studies unit.

Sia Lives on Kilimanjaro
Anna Riwkin-Brick
Macmillan, 1959

A young East African girl decides to follow her brother to Moshi to the Chagga Feast against the wishes of her parents. All works out well as she and her

brother have a personal interview with the King. Excellent photographs accompany this pleasant story which gives an interesting picture of the Chagga people who live on beautiful Mt. Kilimanjaro. Children should enjoy its fantasy aspect.

RECOMMENDED for pre-schoolers through 4th grade.

A Silly Little Kid
Joe Feinstein
Steek-vaugh Co., Texas, 1969

Two boys, one Black and one white, as indicated by the illustrations, spend a full day exploring the streets of their urban neighborhood, looking for something interesting to occupy themselves with; they are in constant conflict since neither wants to do what the other wants. The story lacks luster and appeal as nothing really happens and the unresolved conflict seems to leave one with the feeling of an incomplete story.

The one redeeming quality of this book is the fact that it shows the diversity of occupations and street recreation that gives the city its vitality--a car mechanic, a man who harbors pigeons on his roof, firemen, children scooting on orange crates--all these and more are encountered in the story. The removable cover is much more attractive than the inside illustrations, and this might be a bit deceiving for some children who choose a book by its cover. Readers need to be at least 7-8 years old to handle the text that is both lengthy and plodding.

Snow Storm Before Christmas
Candida Palmer
Lippincott, 1965

A delightful story about two brothers, Eddie and Jason, and their shopping adventures during a snow storm. Their ingenuity and involvement in purchasing Christmas gifts for their mother and sister should have a special significance for all young children.

This story about a Black family in an urban setting is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for young readers, 2-4th grade.

The Snowy Day
Ezra Jack Keats
Viking Press, 1962

This Caldecott Medal winner is the story of a small Black boy's adventures in the snow. The outstanding illustrations depict an urban setting in which all the characters are Black. The bulky shape of the mother may perpetuate a stereotype. Most children love this book.

Pre-school -1. Available in paperback.

Some Of The Days Of Everett Anderson
Lucille Clifton
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970

For each day of the week, a small poem describes a small experience that Everett Anderson might have. The author has done an excellent job in isolating an activity or an impression that a six-year-old might have and revealing his innermost thoughts. On Sunday, Everett "likes to pretend that stars are where apartments end," while on Sunday morning "Daddy's cheek is black and sleek and Everett Anderson kisses it."

Everett's blackness is evident from the bold, energetic illustrations as well as from word images. The poetry has a fresh vitality that reflects his family's urban life. Some pages are exclusively devoted to vivid, life-like pictures.

It would be a good read-aloud book for pre-school through 2nd grade.

Song of The Empty Bottles
Osmond Molarsky
Henry F. Walck, 1968

Thaddeus, a young Black boy, dreams of owning a guitar and tries to earn money for it by collecting empty bottles and old newspapers. This is slow, discouraging work but an adult friend at the neighborhood house encourages him, suggesting that he compose songs as he goes about his work and offering to pay for a good one.

The story is a good one and should appeal to children as it places the hero in a common situation. At the same time it seems authentic--capturing the mood of Thaddeus' urban neighborhood. The characters are warm and at the same time realistically depicted and credible. The illustrations by Tom Feelings contribute a great deal to the authenticity and warmth of the book.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, grades 2-4.

Sounds Are High/Sounds Are Low
Lawrence J. Lowery
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969

A reader for young children apparently intended to stimulate their thoughts about the sources and variations of sounds in their daily lives. The rich, colorful illustrations include both Black and white children .

Pre-school through 3rd grade.

A Special Bravery
Johanna Johnston
Dodd, Mead and Co., 1971

A collection of stories high-lighting the accomplishments of famous Black people whose "special bravery" and talents are told simply for very young readers. Attractive pen and ink illustrations accompany these selections which youngsters should enjoy.

RECOMMENDED for K-4.

A Special Place For Jonny
Dorothy Haas
Albert Whitman, 1966

This is a pleasant story in an urban setting about a young boy who overcomes his initial reluctance to begin school with the help of a friendly fruit vendor, Mr. Elefantopaulos. Although the situation is integrated and the main character, Jonny, is Black, only the white characters play an active role in helping Jonny feel comfortable in this strange, new experience.

RECOMMENDED for K-3.

Spotty
Margaret Rey
Harper and Row, 1945

Little rabbits get together and realize that differences are no basis for rejection in this fable about prejudice. The story is told with a light humorous touch. However, the conclusion becomes fuzzy because the grandparent's acceptance of the different rabbit is not clear.

This important subject matter is treated rather sloppily by the author and children would need the assistance of a sensitive person if the book were not to be harmful.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

Start to Draw
Ann Campbell
Watts, 1968

This book is designed to stimulate the very young child's interest in drawing. In an interesting way, it shows him some principles of drawing, design, and basic shapes. This is achieved by utilizing a Black boy in the act of drawing, first a straight line and finally a city street filled with people, animals, buildings and stoplights. As a bonus, some of the pages are colored a rich purple, near the end, though the text itself has a momentum of its own. It is written for preschool--grade 3 children.

In spite of these magnificent qualities, it is disappointing to find the "basis syndrome" quite visible. At one point, the Black boy is isolated in a full page of white faces -- except that the other dark face is portrayed as a notorious looking pirate. To picture the pirate as a Black man in this context can easily help to reinforce a negative image of Black people. In addition, the author chose to portray all the community helpers as white, which further solidifies the tokenism apparent in her work.

Again, it is too bad that the illustrations are infused with this faulty perspective.

Steffie and Me
Phyllis Hoffman
Harper and Row, 1970

This is a story of two little girls, one white and one Black, who are neighbors and best friends. Their lives mix naturally and pleasantly both in school and in their crowded urban neighborhood. The author is warm and sympathetic but not patronizing. She avoids romanticizing the children's home life and shows them engaged in interesting activities and warm family lives. Appealing illustrations match the mood of the narrative. Grades K - 2.

Stevie
John Steptoe
Harper and Row, 1969

Stevie is a little boy who spends the days with Robert's family while his mother is working. Robert begrudgingly looks after him and resents the intrusion into his life -- until Stevie is gone. He then remembers the fun and good times they had together.

This realistic and warm story is simply told in the words of the author who is a Black, urban youngster. The bold, colorful illustrations evoke a feeling of warmth and intimacy. Although the story is particularly appropriate for urban children, its theme is universal and should appeal to all young readers.

For grades K - 3.

A Story, A Story: An African Tale Retold
Gail E. Haley
Atheneum, 1970

Based on African mythology, this beautiful story tells how Ananse, the spider man, becomes guardian of all the stories in the world. To achieve this exalted position from the Sky God, he must wrestle with such characters as the leopard-of-the-terrible-teeth, the hornet-who-stings-like-fire and the fairy-whom-men-never-see.

Children should be enchanted with the drama of this story, mirrored in the lovely woodcuts. They are inlaid with rich ice cream colors from chocolate to velvet pink.

Since several words and royal names associated with West African folklore are used, Ananse's story will give children a chance to become acquainted with a language that has been vastly ignored.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 1-4. A Caldecott winner for 1971.

The Story Grandmother Told
Martha Alexander
Dial Press, 1969

This small-sized book seems to be just right for small hands in a variety of ways. It is a story centering on a small girl who persuades her grandmother to engage in an old fashioned art--spontaneous story-telling. Both Lisa and her grandmother are Black. Somehow we seem to feel the affection existing between them. The grandmother's story is a simpl , uncluttered story about a girl who starts out from home to buy an ice cream cone but decides instead to get a balloon. Her cat makes the balloon burst before she arrives back home. The illustrations too are uncluttered, possessing a simplicity and delicacy that make the personalities seem neat and warm.

Straight Hair, Curly Hair
Augusta Goldin
Crowell, 1966

This is a "let's read and find out book" that explains how hair grows and why its characteristics cannot be permanently changed. The illustrations at the beginning show Black and white people together, but there are no Black people towards the end.

Although the book has merit, its drawback is that the author's ignorance of how Black people groom their hair makes it incomplete. There would have been a better balance of information for instance if hair straightening or Afro styles had been illustrated. This omission is typical of sanctioned ignorance: a scientific book about hair for children that does not fairly describe hair styles other than Anglo-saxon.

Appropriate for K-2.

The Street of the Flower Boxes (1966)
When Carlos Closed the Street (1969)
Peggy Mann
Coward McCann

Both of these books are about city children, Black and Puerto Rican, who undertake some projects to modify their run-down neighborhood. Because of the relevancy of the theme, these books could have been useful reading, but they are disappointing.

Under Carlos' leadership and ingenuity, his streat was blocked off from traffic and transformed into a playground for one day. In the other book, Carlos sells flower boxes to his neighbors in hopes of improving the appearance of the drab street.

These are superficial solutions to the real problems of the urban poor. Flower boxes and a temporary playground do not answer basic needs. The author should not promote this concept, either to innocent children or more omniscient adults. However, certain reviewers see these books as offering solutions for urban problems. Referring to Street of the Flower Boxes, Mayor Lindsay

says

> I have always said that it is my aim to make New York livable. This story goes a long way in providing the direction and inspiration to achieve that aim.

Flower boxes and converted street playgrounds--at that, secured through the labyrinth of bureaucracy--will not make New York livable.

Other reviewers such as the late Whitney Young, Jr., of the Urban League and the Library Journal are equally as lavish in their compliments. According to a comment from Saturday Review, Flower Boxes "is a believable example of self-directed urban renovation."

We disagree with these opinions and believe that these books are harmful.

Both of these books oversimplify problems, and most aggravating is that the concept offered for solving problems is pat, simple, and misleading. A flower box has never satisfied hungry stomachs, slum housing, unemployment and filthy streets.

Another serious fault is that white people are made to be undeserving heroes in both stories. The idea of the flower boxes comes from a white couple who moved into the run-down neighborhood, refurnished their brownstone with fancy and expensive furnishings and then proceeded to tell the "natives" how to live better. In the book about the playground, the police do not behave as they normally do in a poor neighborhood; they are white, of course, and they act civilized and friendly. Carlos' grandmother tells him repeatedly to "stay away from cops;" the author never explains the grandmother's point of view. Moreover, the author does allow Carlos to disregard his grandmother's advice The police advise him to get a petition from the neighborhood people stating that a street playground is desired. The author plays up the "Establishment," making it appear that the problems of poor people can be resolved by merely making a request to top officials. Poor people have had to exert extraordinary pressures on city governments to get basic services. This book creates a false impression.

There is also some stereotyping in the book. It is fairly obvious that the only responsible and caring people in the book are the whites (the police, the shop-owners, the upperclass couple, etc.) and the irresponsible and apathetic people are the parents of the Black and Puerto Rican children. According to the story, these parents allow their children to engage in juvenile delinquency without any reprimanding; they don't want to sign a petition; they mistrust children other than their own; they use excessive corporal punishment.

All of this emerges in the dialogue and are ideas conveyed strongly enough so that children can form stereotypes of certain groups of people.

The white woman is the only female in the story referred to as a "lady" and she is further characterized as an angel of mercy.

The profuse compliments given these books from well-respected people will increase their utilization. This is unfortunate. These kinds of books merely promote myths. They do not clarify the deteriorating aspects of urban living. They do not make an accurate comment on minority groups who are exploited by technology, government works and merchants.

Because of the publicity received, we feel it is necessary to make as strong a statement as possible to dissuade parents, teachers and librarians from making these books by Peggy Mann available to young children.

Both are NOT RECOMMENDED.

Sunflowers for Tina
Anne Morris Baldwin
Four Winds Press, 1970

In spite of the congestion surrounding her in New York city, Tina is determined to have a garden. Many children will enjoy the spunk and vitality of Tina, a Black youngster about seven years old. She plants a bunch of carrots near the street curb, an effort which provides a quiet bit of humor for the story but a scolding from her mother. Later, Tina's brother discovers some sunflowers growing wild in the city. This pacifies Tina and enables her to make up a sunflower dance to bring joy to her ailing grandmother.

The episodes with the grandmother seem unnecessary for the structural continuity of the story; however, the disabilities of the grandmother are handled with compassion.

City children in particular can identify with several elements in the story; a working mother, the closeknit family life, the stresses and joys of living in an overcrowded city. The excellent illustrations are richly colored and help to convey the warm feelings generated in this story.

Advanced reader for 2nd and 3rd grade level.

Sweet Pea: A Black Girl Growing Up in the Rural South
Jill Krementz
Harcourt Brace and World, 1969

This is the story of a 10-year-old Black girl who lives in a southern rural community. The clear black and white photographs portray the hardships which confront this family as a result of poverty. However, they also show Sweet Pea as a lively, attractive youngster whose daily experiences include both somber and happy moments. K-4.

Swimming Hole
Jerrold Beim
William Morrow, 1950

This is a profusely illustrated story about the prejudice a white child shows toward a Black child. When the white boy rejects the Black boy and tries to convince the other white children to do the same, he himself becomes the object of ridicule when his peers reject him because he has an ugly sunburn. The Black boy resolves the problem by including him in the group and eventually teaches him to swim.

The Black child is given a martyr-like role to play--he must forgive and the white child must be forgiven in spite of his vicious act. The white child is not sufficiently informed about the ill-effects of his attitude. The author seems insensitive to the seriousness of the problem, passing off the white boy's attitude as simply "not nice." Also, the analogy between sunburn and the natural color of a person's skin is too superficial even for children and is not conducive to positive identification for Black or white children.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

That New River Train
Lucy Hawkinson
Albert Whitman, 1970

This book consists of the words and illustrations based on the song, "Jenny You Can't Love One." The author-illustrator uses an appealing Black child for the number "1", followed by attractive animal pictures to represent the numbers 2, 3, 4, etc. This should be a very pleasant book to use with young children either in the home or in a primary classroom, grades K-2.

This Is The Way
Jessie O. Jones
Viking Press, 1951

In this sensitively illustrated book children from around the world are shown practicing their religion. Their facial structures and skin colors are beautifully done yet the book is didactic in approach and the strongly implied progression toward Christianity as "the highest peak of revelation" does little to teach children respect for other religions. This is not a storybook nor is it a book that an average four- to seven-year-old child would enjoy.

This Is The World
Josephine Van Dolzen Pease
Rand Mc Nally, 1944

This is an introduction to geography for very young readers with information about the earth's climate, flora and fauna, topography and peoples. Apparently the author is seeking to promote understanding between peoples of different countries and a "one world" concept.

The book shows many dark-skinned African and Asian children but only one of the many, many American children shown is black. In the section entitled "Friends for Everyone" none of the ten children pictured is black. Thus we have another example of merely superficial integration.

Written for K-2 but NOT RECOMMENDED.

Three Baby Chicks
Ruth Jaynes
Bowmar, 1968

See Bowmar Early Childhood Series review.

Timothy's Flower
Jean Van Leeuwen
Random House, 1967

This story covers the urban neighborhood of a small Black boy who is struggling to preserve a tiny flower which he brings home from the park. He does so by making friends with an unfriendly neighbor lady. The softly colored sketches of Timothy are delightful and vibrant and the personalities he meets are quite interesting.

It should be pointed out that all of the shopkeepers and people at work are white, even though the story scenes represent a large city.

RECOMMENDED for grades one and two.

Tomato Boy
Mariana Prieto
John Day Co., 1967

Davey, a young Black boy of Bahamian ancestry, takes an after-school job selling tomatoes so he can afford to buy a red shirt to wear when he plays the drums in his school show. But instead of spending the money on himself, he uses it to buy shoes for his friend Paco, a Puerto Rican boy, whose family are migrant workers. When he rescues the cat of a rich customer, the reward money enables both boys to have their wish.

This is a fast-moving story which seems realistic and naturally told. The south Florida setting adds interest and the poverty of the boys' families is neither romanticized nor shown to mournfully. The white lady seems at the end to be somewhat of a "Lady Bountiful" and the story would have been better if she had simply given Davey his reward without adding drum lessons and visiting his school show. This drawback is, however, outweighed by the good qualities of the story including the universal appeal of the plot and the fact that the hero provides positive identification for any child.

Tombi's Song
Jenny Seed
Rand McNally, 1966

A little Zulu girl goes to the store on an errand for her mother. On the way she loses her money and must figure out how to earn more money to complete the errand.

The book has many good points. There is a common theme: a young girl learning to overcome her childish fears and to depend on her own resources. Within this context the details about Zulu life and customs which the book presents will be readily absorbed by children. The story is a good one, skillfully told with a graceful and unusual use of the Zulu language.

It is unfortunate that the story ends with a white tourist giving the little girl money for her singing and dancing. The situation probably is not contrived but the impression on the young reader could reinforce a common stereotype, viz. a white authority figure rewarding a Black person for a song and dance act. A summary on the book jacket corroborates the point of view by maintaining that the book's theme is the child's discovery that her "true talents" lay in singing and dancing.

The strongest drawback of the book, however, is to be found in the illustrations and illustrations are of particular importance in a K-3 book. The characters in this story are lifeless and inhuman in appearance, possessing no beauty or individuality. The featureless face of the main character is more suggestive of a slave doll than of a little girl. The fact that the illustrator was able to convey individuality and humanity in the white tourist leaves one with a strong impression of a book coming from a white perspective, from the outside, with little sensitivity to or respect for its subjects.

In spite of the book's good points the illustrations and paternalistic incident are sufficiently harmful for the book to be NOT RECOMMENDED.

Tommy and Dee-Dee
Yen Liang
Oxford University, 1953

The author illustrates Eastern and Western family and school traditions by using two small boys engaged in typical experiences. This book breaks with tradition by utilizing a Black child to represent the American way of life; a Chinese youngster portrays the Orient.

The book is small to fit tiny hands and has simple text. The drawings are in color, but stilted. For pre-schoolers through grade 3.

Tony's Birds
Millicent E. Selsam
Harper and Row, 1961

This is a rather warm tale of a father who helps his son, a young Black boy, discover different kinds of birds, using a guide book and field glasses. It is a science book for beginning readers and this is probably the book's main appeal, rather than the personality of his people. Tony's blackness is incidental to the story, which is appropriate in view of the book's purpose. However, the illustrator handles his Blackness timidly. According to our criteria, the illustrations of Tony are "grey". It would have been better if the artist had been more definitive and forthright in his pictures of people. K-2.

A Tree This Tall
Inez Rice
Lothrop, 1970

This is a touching story about a Black boy who lives in the city where the buildings are old and very tall. He finds an acorn and dreams of planting it and growing trees.

Unfortunately, a squirrel comes along and eats the acorn. Jeremy is really disappointed but later he decides that he'll find another acorn and that his dreams will come true. He is willing to wait for them.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Grades 1-3.

A Trip Through School
Jeanne A. Rowe
Franklin Watts, 1969

This book takes the reader on a trip through an urban elementary school. Large black and white photographs show all aspects of the school; the office, the kitchen, classrooms, playgrounds.

The purpose of the book is to introduce young children to school life and for this purpose it seems a little somber both in the text and the photographs. However, the photographs do show a well integrated staff and student body.

Trixie and the Tiger
Victoria Cabassa
Abelard, Schuman, 1967

At home and at school, young Trixie engages in a fantasy, convincing herself that a tiger lives under her bed. Eventually, her teacher gets her a tiger kttten to satisfy her insatiable passion for tigers. Young children will undoubtedly love the illustrations here, though we have reservations about one picture as well as other qualities in the book.

For a story that involves a number of people, it is poorly integrated. Trixie appears to be the only Black in an all white environment. This is the least of its faults, however. Overall, the characters tend to be shallow and unconvincing.

Throughout the book, the teacher seems condescending, climaxed in the scene when she promises to take Trixie to the circus on the condition that Trixie gets "cleaned up."

Both the author and her teacher-character show no respect for Trixie's family. Her family is never shown although reference is made to Trixie's mother and the teacher goes to Trixie's house. The teacher gets the cat for Trixie without securing her parents' permission and also takes Trixie away from home without asking the mother.

Not all relationships involving white teachers and Black children have been this indiscreet, but unfortunately the author has put into her story some common grievances voiced by Black parents, such as the cleanliness mandate and authority figures making ultimate decisions without consulting the people involved.

In other situations the teacher seems quite demeaning and belittling to Trixie--so much so that we feel that children will not enjoy or sympathize with Trixie. Instead of acknowleding Trixie's fantasy world, the teacher disbelieves her and makes her look like a foolish spectacle.

The illustrations are lively and attractive enough, except that when the tigers are shown in a real forest the people at this point are shown as frightened and belligerent: this is a subtle reinforcement of myths and stereotypes about people who live in the forest, such as in India or Africa. It certainly does not help children to have respect for people who live close to nature.

We believe that this story is not healthy for either Black or white children because the author is unsuccessful in dealing with the emotions and relationships between people. One could further speculate that since the book does not create any positive feelings or a sense of esteem for Trixie, its main character, children who dislike Trixie could then conclude that they don't like Black people.

We do NOT RECOMMEND it as a good book.

The Tuesday Elephant
Nancy Garfield
Crowell, 1968

The story of this African boy conveys a lot of feeling as it recounts how Gideon develops a friendship with a baby elephant. Gideon is Kenyan and some words from his language are frequently interspersed throughout the text.

The author uses imagery frequently which helps to make the vocabulary suitable for the advanced primary reader from 3rd grade reading level up. The lovely four color illustrations enhance a well written story.

The Two Friends
Greta Mannheim
Knopf, 1968

This picture story tells of a little Black girl's first days at school and her home life in a housing project. Although the story line is lifeless, it does help to link the photographs together, which fortunately, are excellent shots. To achieve a better balance, the author could have shown Jennie's mother as she took her daughter to school and perhaps a dinner meal where more than spaghetti and crackers were being served.

Appropriate for K - 1.

Two Is A Team
Lorraine and Jerold Beim
Harcourt Brace and World, 1945

Two young friends, one Black and one white, learn that the best results can be produced by working together. Both the theme and the pictures tend to suggest some artificiality, which seems to make the book rather unsophisticated and dull for contemporary thinking. The book itself does not seem to have any images that might be potentially harmful or offensive.

Written for K - 2.

The Valentine Box
Maud Hart Lovelace
Crowell, 1966

When a small Black child moves to a new home and school in the suburbs, her difficulty in making friends is resolved on Valentine's Day. Though the story is absorbing and well illustrated, it does raise some questions.

The illustrations show that Janice is the only Black child in her class. She does not receive a valentine. Though the author has placed a Black child in a discriminatory situation, she takes no responsibility to explain if this occurs because Janice is Black, because she is shy or because she is new -- or a combination of factors. The author focuses momentarily on the fact that Janice did not receive a card and alludes to the possibility that her color may have some bearing on this. The unhappiness experienced by Janice seems real, yet the solution is contrived. This kind of story seems to convey a sense of frustration and hopelessness for Black children. Furthermore, it provides white children with a chance to believe that Black children should exemplify martyr-like behavior in an all white situation.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

A Weed Is A Flower
Aliki Brandenberg
Prentice-Hall, 1967

This is one of the best biographies about a Black man for young children that we have read. George Washington Carver, a distinguished Black scientist, discovered many effective uses for the peanut and the sweet potato. Carver's humble beginning, poor health, diligent work, and contributions to science are told with simple descriptive words which are suitable for young children to read and to understand. The illustrator seems to have captured the mood and tone of the story with beautiful color drawings. One would consider this a must on all elementary school library shelves and an ideal science resource book for children.

RECOMMENDED for grades 2-4.

What Happens When You Go To The Hospital
Arthur Shay
Reilly and Lee, 1969

This is a photographic description of an actual visit of a little Black girl to the hospital to have her tonsils out. Nothing seems to be hidden and the procedures seem authentic. The photographs can be enjoyed by children because they are sensitive and humorous. Karen is a charmer with a typical five-year-old's personality. The book provides healthy identification for both Black and white children because it deals with the universal anxiety that accompanies a hospital stay.

It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED both for the photography because it utilizes a Black child and her family and the subject matter. Pre-school through 3rd grade.

What Is Black?
Bettye F. Baker
Franklin Watts, 1969

This book consists of many lovely photographs and word pictures of familiar things that are black, such as dirt, a puppy and licorice sticks. The author and photographer are successful in attempting to help replace in a young child the negative connotations of blackness with more positive symbols. A must in every classroom. K-6.

What Mary Jo Shared
Janice May Udry
Albert Whitman, 1966

In this story, set in an integrated classroom, Mary Jo, the Black heroine, can think of nothing original to share with her classmates at "show and tell" time. Finally, she comes up with the perfect answer--her father. The story is well told, well illustrated and presents a problem common to many children. Several other early reading books are based on Mary Jo's experiences. For grades 2-3.

What Mary Jo Wanted
Janice May Udry
Albert Whitman, 1968

Mary Jo wants a puppy. When her wish is granted she learns that caring for a pet can be a big responsibility. This integrated story focuses on a Black middle-class family in a universal situation. One of several "Mary Jo" books, all of which are HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. K-3.

When Carlos Closed the Street
Peggy Mann
Coward McCann, 1969

See The Street of the Flower Boxes review.

Where Did You Come From?
John R. Koch
Hale & Co., 1968

On first impression, this may seem to be a tremendous book, partly because it deals with the "identity consciousness" of Afro-Americans and traces their ancestry directly back to Africa in a way that children can readily understand. Children are likely to be impressed because 1) the Black child-narrator develops the story in a dramatic way and they can make an easy identification with him, 2) the story plays up military incidents and the killing of animals like elephants and lions, and 3) it uses color illustrations similar to cartoon figures. These commendable features should not, however, obscure some of its more subtle but perverse faults.

In essence, Where Did You Come From is a story within a story in which a contemporary Black child gives an elaborate explanation of his ancestry, dating back to Africa. Even though the words are spoken by a Black character, the perspective is white.

That perspective emerges early in the story when some white kids are "surprised" to see a "Negro" family moving into their neighborhood. This comment, shot straight from the hip, echoes reality. The difference is that in a real situation, an individual has a chance to be aware of and respond to gutsy remarks. On the printed page, such a raw remark makes it seem that there is indeed something wrong or mysterious or puzzling about these folks precisely because they are "Negro." The burden of responsibility is put on the "Negro" and not on the situation that created the "Negro" and enabled the innocent white kids to be "surprised." The Black child-narrator begins his story defensively.

If Black parents were to read this story to their kids, some would be rightfully indignant. The white character has the prerogative to be "surprised," indeed, as this does reflect realty ; but there is a concomittant responsibility on the part of the writer to help his readers understand why the white children could assume this arrogant position. Otherwise, the book becomes a means of reinforcing irrational white attitudes about Blacks.

This book combines a strange mixture of fact and fiction. The Black child is named Jefferson Washington, "in honor" of two former slave masters, viz., George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. That these presidents were prominent slaveowners is a little knownfact and ought to be more routinely a part of their historical lives. However, we wonder if slaves adopted these names in admiration of their master or because slaves did not have alternatives. Right on, white perspective.

The book identifies Black people as "Negroes." The slavemasters and other white characters are never categorized racially. Right on, white perspective.

The occupations of Black people as represented by Jefferson Washington's ancestors are limited to being warrior-hunters, slaves, servants and various roles in the Civil War and World Wars I and II. From the hub of the "ghetto," the reaction tothis kind of selectivity might be "Right on, white perspective, we have merely fought your war and labored your fields."

The most patronizing idea occurs with Abraham Lincoln who is impressed with the abilities of one of Jeff's ancestors. Yet the President could only utilize this man's talent as a servant in the White House. Furthermore, the picture of the servant insinuates a gleaming, grateful, befrocked Uncle Tom who should be proud of his menial job.

The patriotic images are overwhelming and rather ironic when we consider that the inherent roles assigned in the story demonstrate the inequality of life in America. Furthermore, this kind of patriotic exaggeration weakens the fiber of the story.

Finally, this book seems to give credence to a false myth--that Blacks are overwhelmingly grateful for white paternalism.

Some reviewers maintain that this book is useful for instilling pride into young Black children concerning their African and Afro-American background. This is a desirable goal. We submit that any resulting inflated egos derived from this book come from a false basis. Children may not be able to articulate--or even notice--the subtle images of inferiority and paternalism that abound in this book. But adults have to take notice of them. Negative attitudes are often developed in covert ways.

Jefferson Washington IV tries hard to preserve his dignity. He begins speaking from a defensive position, however. Except for his African family, his other ancestors are not shown as being worthy in themselves. They are always shown under the authority of white people who have exerted repressive power over them; they must depend on whites for recognition. Such representations make it difficult for Jefferson Washington IV to transfer a genuine sense of dignity.

The idea of relating Afro-American ancestry back to Africa is marvelous and the literary technique used here is compelling. We wish the author had more thoughtfully considered that much of his story reflected the white perspective.

Where Did You Come From is a very easy reader and perhaps this critique contains more words than the book itself. So be it.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

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Where Does The Day Go?
Walter M. Myers
Parents Magazine Press, 1969

Steven and his friends stroll through the park in the evening with Steven's father. After the children share their fantasies about what happens to the day when night comes, Steven's father provides them with an explanation. A low-keyed pleasant story with warm, colorful illustrations that reveal the characters' ethnic diversity.

RECOMMENDED for pre-school through 3rd grade.

Whistle for Willie
Ezra Jack Keats
Viking Press, 1964

This book, along with some other Keats' books in which Peter is the hero, seems to be a perennial favorite with both children and adults. Peter teaches himself to whistle in this story and Willie, his dog, responds. The text is simple and uncluttered, yet meaningful; the drawings in color are magnificient; and Peter, who grows up in each succeeding book is a magnetic Black child.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for pre-school through grade 1.

Zamani Goes To Market
Muriel L. Feelings
Seabury Press, 1970

In this story, the unfamiliar setting of a village in Kenya is made more understandable by a universal situation--that of a boy growing old enough to do a man's work while he learns the concept of thinking of others first. His simple surroundings are portrayed with dignity and respect.

Aside from enhancing the young child's knowledge of African life, this book enables him to identify positively with people from another country. The illustrations are sensitive and appropriate.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for grades 1-4.

Who Needs Holes?
Sam & Beryl Epstein
Hawthorn, 1970

This is a provocative discussion of holes we need and use every day; holes in our clothes, like arm holes; button holes; holes in our food like doughnuts; holes in pipes for water to come through in our bathroom showers. Most of the models are children throughout the book. This is a good informational type book. K - 2.

Why The Sun Was Late
Benjamin Elkin
Parents Magazine Press, 1966

Based on African mythology, this short fantasy is enchanting from beginning to end. An outstanding quality is the rich technicolors of the illustrations, often full-paged. The artist has provided many close-up interpretations of natural life in the forest. At one point, the tremendous contrast between day and night leaves one spellbound.

Basically, this is an animal story. It begins with the self-delusion of a fly who thinks his bantam weight causes a decayed tree to overturn. This, in turn, upsets the ecology of the forest and a chain reaction of mishaps among various animals occurs for sometime. Finally, when the sun fails to rise, the birds appeal to the Great Spirit who is able to restore order. Again, the superb illustrations seem to subdue the mythical elements of the story. The text can be handled by advanced primary readers but the magic drama created by the plot and the illustrations would appeal to ages 4 - 12. Highly recommended.

Will I Have A Friend?
Miriam Cohen
Macmillan, 1967

This story tells of the first experience a little white boy has when he enters nursery school. The teacher is Black and the illustrations of the black and white children make the crowded urban setting seem realistic and pleasant. Pre-schoolers and perhaps first-grade children could identify with the characters who appear happy and at ease in this setting.

Will You Carry Me?
Edna Walker Chandler
Albert Whitman, 1965

Gemo, a boy who lives in Liberia, takes some cocoanuts to market to trade for fish for his family's dinner. Since he is lazy, he tries to solicit a ride from a man in a jeep, a taxi driver, and a bus driver. Finally, an old man provides a ride for Gemo in his wheelbarrow. Soon Gemo decides that he was better off "carrying his own load."

Throughout the story, children become acquainted with some of the customs prevalent in Liberia. K - 3.

William C. Handy, Father of the Blues
Elizabeth Rider Montgomery
Garrard, 1968

This biography of W.C. Handy, a great Black composer and musician, does a thorough job of telling how Handy made his contribution to America in spite of the fact that he could not live as a free American in his lifetime. It is very inspiring.

RECOMMENDED for grades 3 - 5.

Wilt Chamberlain: A Crowell Biography
Kenneth Rudeen
Crowell, 1970

This is a biography of the famous Black basketball player, Wilt Chamberlain. Parts of it are somewhat overemphasized by stressing his wealth and material gains which have resulted from his athletic achievements. However, it should have appeal to youngsters interested in sports and sports heroes.

Appropriate for grades 2 - 4.

Your Skin and Mine
Paul Showers
Crowell, 1965

This book explains the function of our skin. It includes a good explanation of skin color with lively illustrations featuring three friends -- a Black, a White and an Oriental. K - 3.

Your Hand in Mine
Sam Cornish
Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970

Sam is a lovely little lack boy who spends much of his time writing poems on scraps of papers, sidewalks, or fences. Writing poetry helps him to cope with his fears and loneliness and is his way of reaching out to others. Finally, someone reaches back and Sam finds a friend.

Sam's world is mostly Black and seems to be captured naturally and sympathetically. One has the impression that the writer is telling of his boyhood in an urban Black milieu. The poetic language of the story and Tom Feeling's sensitive illustrations combine to produce an outstanding children's book.

A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED reader for grades 2 - 4.

Chapter 6

Moving Beyond Token Integration

Literature has been instrumental in aggravating the racism of America. It is not duly recognized as such. Nevertheless, it is powerful in its racist hypnosis. We have attempted to show some of the ways in which this hypnotic process begins in books for the very young. Perhaps the most serious offense committed by the literary world has been the virtual exclusion (omission) of Black people from children's books. On the one hand, the omission itself strengthens the omnipotence of white supremacy. On the other, it is part of the myth complex appropriate to the racism of American culture---it is a way of acting out that Black people do not exist or count.

Although we are encouraged by the growing body of literature which acknowledges and includes the experiences of Black people, such books still are too few in number. Because of the paucity of multi-ethnic books at every age level, the average child is confined to seeing and reading about white Americans. The rarity of Blacks and other minorities in picture books and readers is astonishing, as any parent or librarian can easily see by scanning the shelves of libraries or bookstores. In one respect, promotion blurbs from publishers are misleading because of their emphasis on "new multi-ethnic materials." Because of a few integrated story books, we are lulled into believing that a substantial number of books include Blacks.

The real fact is that white children spend most of their reading time in a mirror reflection of themselves while Black children spend their time looking into that mirror.

Just as the world of books provides for little interaction between black and white characters, the segregated society in which we now live makes it virtually impossible for Black and white children to have any meaningful contact. Although integration on the physical level through housing, schools, and jobs has made moderate progress, it is doubtful that we will eliminate the gigantic geographical barriers (inner city versus suburb) that now separate whites from Blacks within this generation. White and Black children are unlikely to be playing with one another to any extent

depsite the beautiful dreams of Dr. King. Books can help to bridge that gap and prepare children for the day when racial oppression and segregation are no longer a way of life.

We must move beyond the idea that integrated books are needed only by Black children. While the Black child needs to have books that include him for his own self-confirmation, it is crucial that the white child be exposed to integrated literature. It is impossible for the Black child to grow up unaware of the experiences of the dominant white culture. He is immersed in that culture through literature, the mass media and all the institutions he comes in contact with in the course of his life. But it is possible for the white child to grow up unaware of the experience of Black people. Most white children by virtue of where they live and by virtue of the symbols placed before them have little opportunity to see beyond the white segregated world that encloses them. Therefore, it is crucial that the literary and communication world of white children be integrated so that they can begin to appreciate the humanity of Black people with whom they seldom have contact.

It is imperative, then, that we eliminate the dormant racism of having books portray white people almost exclusively. We must bring the Black child into the white child's world. We must also let the Black child see himself in the larger world, in the world outside his physical being.

One or two Black-focused or integrated books out of ten is not enough. We must begin to realize how necessary it is for most of the literature that children come in contact with to have a number of Black characters. This applies to comic books, magazines, mother goose rhymes, textbooks, and ordinary readers. If we were to reach ten percent, that would be an auspicious beginning, yet still not enough to repair the damage caused by the messages conveyed in the majority of books in which Black people never appear.

In our eagerness to find integrated reading material for young children, we must be careful not to sacrifice quality in our search for quantity. We caution the reader to be selective in choosing Black-inclusive books for the young as we have found that there are all too few of superior quality. Although the bulk of books

we have examined for this study are placed in the "recommended" category, most are run of the mill. Perhaps this reflects the state of children's literature as a whole. The best books, of course, go beyond the quality of their Blackness for making a rich reading experience. It is this type of book that should appear in multiple copies on book shelves in schools and libraries so that they are easily accessible for all children to enjoy. It is these books that parents---both Black and white---should be eager to have their children own.

Perhaps the prime value of this book lies in its potential use as a teaching resource for adults.

We hope to reach the adult audience who deal directly with the minds of children. Hopefully, by detailing our critical opinions, this commentary will sensitize other people to the residual effects of racism, which like polluted air, can exist in the literature for children simply because certain poisonous ideas have been implanted in the American system for several generations. More than three hundred years have gone into the making of racist attitudes---a span longer than the establishment of this republic. In order to provoke change, it will take a firm willingness and commitment to change as well as some intellectual muscle. We ask that each of you begin to consider what you can do to create an environment for children that will promote a better understanding of the white relationship to Black people, and other minorities. None of us can afford to be complacent. It is not enough to convey to our children the rhetoric of respect for all human beings when so much of their experiences in the real world and in the world of books inculcates a belief in the natural superiority of white people. We must each begin, in some small way, to try to change the nature of that experience.

The following ideas are suggested as ways in which you can effect significant change.

1. Ask yourself what you can do in your own home to insure that your family is exposed to a culturally diverse environment. Consider ways of integrating the visual experiences of your children and yourself---not only through books, but also through pictures, magazines and toys. Be sure that your children have an opportunity to read---or to have read to them---books involving Black people which are of exceptional quality.

2. Make an effort to insure that your local libraries have multiple copies of good books involving Black people, not only at the primary level, but at every age level.

   Encourage librarians to arrange small group discussions around the issue of How to Choose Books Involving Black People. This book could serve as a guide for discussions; participants could review and discuss books themselves which is an extremely valuable and instructive experience.

3. Be sure that multiple copies of good books involving Blacks are available in your schools, private, parochial and public. Your local P.T.A. or Human Relations Council may be an effective avenue for bringing together community people and educators to discuss the question of How to Choose Books Involving Black People. Certainly, it is crucial that the criteria we have outlined be considered in the selection of text books and other instructional materials for the schools.

4. When you come across a particularly good book involving Black people, write a letter to the publisher letting him know that you value and encourage such efforts. It is equally important that you inform a publisher if they have published a book that is particularly harmful. A group of letter writers can be an effective force in lobbying for good Black-inclusive books.

5. Organize a Children's Book Club which can make a concerted campaign for better and more integrated literature for the young. You might subscribe to a publication entitled Interracial Books for Children which will keep you abreast of new titles and related activities focused toward providing good reading for children.

6. Since we have only begun to scratch the surface in looking at books involving Blacks for the young, we encourage others to begin to evaluate the range of literature for young and old, not only in terms of the treatment of Black people, but in terms of all the other groups in society who have received an unfair and unequal treatment in literature, e.g.

Chicanos, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Orientals, and women.

7. Finally, take advantage of whatever opportunities are available to increase your own understanding of the history and experiences of Black people through courses in Black history, lectures, movies, discussion groups, etc. If you are informed and sensitive to the issues, you can become a more effective advocate for the changes which are needed.

Since Starting Out Right is a pioneer study in examining Black-inclusive juvenile books on an in-depth level, we hope that it encourages others to initiate the necessary changes. We hope that it will quickly become obsolete because the level of sensitivity among publishers, writers and educators will have dramatically increased.

We hope that this study will be a point of reference for teachers and textbook editors; curriculum specialists and librarians; parents and publishers alike; and for a most important group---the people who control the puppets from behind the stage---authors and would-be authors.

We hope that the questions we raise about unacceptable books will stimulate a more thoughtful appraisal of the ingredients necessary to create a good story in terms of the implicit racist attitudes and the image of Black people it presents. We have found that such an appraisal helps to generate a deeper level of awareness of the ways in which racism and prejudice are woven into the fabric of our lives and give shape to our perceptions and feelings about ourselves and others.

If we can understand the impact of these forces upon us, we can more realistically confront the issues and problems which have created tensions between Black and white Americans.